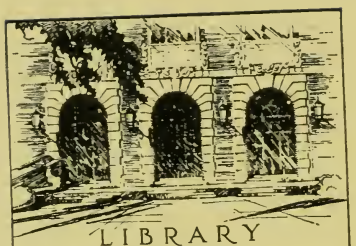

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THE
WRECK OF THE "GROSVENOR."

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THE

WRECK OF THE "GROSVENOR:"

AN ACCOUNT OF

THE MUTINY OF THE CREW AND THE LOSS OF THE SHIP

WHEN TRYING TO MAKE THE BERMUDAS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE WRECK OF THE "GROSVENOR."

CHAPTER I.

Our next job was to man the port-braces and bring the ship to a westerly course. But before we went to this work the boatswain and I stood for some minutes looking at the appearance of the sky.

The range of cloud which had been but a low-lying and apparently a fugitive bank in the north-west at midnight, was now so far advanced as to project nearly over our heads, and what rendered its aspect more sinister was the steely colour of the sky, which it ruled with a line, here and there

rugged, but for the most part singularly even, right from the confines of the north-eastern to the limits of the south-western horizon. All the central portion of this vast surface of cloud was of a livid hue, which, by a deception of the eye, made it appear convex, and at frequent intervals a sharp shower of arrowy lightning whizzed from that portion of it furthest away from us, but as yet we could hear no thunder.

"When the rain before the wind, then your topsail halliards mind," chaunted the boatswain. "There's rather more nor a quarter o' an inch o' rain there, and there's something worse nor rain astern of it."

The gloomiest feature of this approaching tempest, if such it were, was the slowness, at once mysterious and impressive, of its approach.

I was not, however, to be deceived by this into supposing that, because it had

taken nearly all night to climb the horizon, there was no wind behind it. I had had experience of a storm of this kind, and remembered the observations of one of the officers of the ship, when speaking of it. "Those kind of storms," he said, "are not driven by wind, but create it. They keep a hurricane locked up in their insides, and wander across the sea, on the look-out for ships; when they come across something worth wrecking they let fly. Don't be deceived by their slow pace, and imagine them only thunderstorms. They'll burst like an earthquake in a dead calm over your head, and whenever you see one coming snug your ship right away down to the last reef in her, and keep your stern at it."

"I am debating, bo'sun," said I, "whether to bring the ship round or keep her before it. What do you think?"

"There's a gale of wind there. I can smell it," he replied; "but we're snug enough to lie close, aren't we?" looking up at the masts.

"That's to be proved," said I. "We'll bring her close if you like; but I'm pretty sure we shall have to run for it later on."

"It'll bowl us well away into mid-Atlantic, won't it, Mr. Royle?"

"Yes; I wish we were more to the norrard of Bermudas. However, we'll tackle the yards, and have a try for the tight little islands."

"They're pretty nigh all rocks, aren't they? I never sighted 'em."

"Nor I. But they've got a dockyard at Bermuda, I believe, where the Yankees refit sometimes, and that's about all I know of those islands."

I asked Miss Robertson to put the helm down and keep it there until the compass

pointed west; but the ship had so little way upon her, owing to the small amount of canvas she carried now and the faintness of the wind, that it took her as long to come round as if we had been warping her head to the westwards by a buoy.

Having braced up the yards and steadied the helm, we could do no more; and resolving to profit as much as possible from the interval of rest before us, I directed Cornish to take the wheel, and ordered the steward to go forward and light the galley fire and boil some coffee for breakfast.

"Bo'sun," said I, "you might as well drop below and have a look at those plugs of yours. Take a hammer with you and this light," handing him the binnacle lamp, "and drive the plugs in hard, for if the ship should labour heavily, she might strain them out."

He started on his errand, and I then told

Miss Robertson that there was nothing now to detain her on deck, and thanked her for the great services she had rendered us.

How well I remember her as she stood near the wheel, wearing my straw hat, her dress hitched up to allow freedom to her movements; her small hands with the delicate blue veins glowing through the white clear skin, her yellow hair looped up, though with many a tress straying like an amber-coloured feather; her marble face, her lips pale with fatigue, her beautiful blue eyes fired ever with the same brave spirit, though dim with the weariness of long and painful watching and the oppressive and numbing sense of ever-present danger.

On no consideration would I allow her to remain any longer on deck, and though she begged to stay, I took her hand firmly, and led her into the cuddy to her cabin door.

"You will faithfully promise me to lie down and sleep?" I said.

"I will lie down, and will sleep if I can," she answered, with a wan smile.

"We have succeeded in saving you so far," I continued, earnestly, "and it would be cruel, very cruel, and hard upon me, to see your health break down for the want of rest and sleep, when both are at your command, now that life is bright again, and when any hour may see us safe on the deck of another vessel."

"You shall not suffer through me," she replied. "I will obey you, indeed I will do anything you want."

I kissed her hand respectfully, and said that a single hour of sound sleep would do her a deal of good; by that time I would take care that breakfast should be ready for her and her father, and I then held open the cabin door for her to enter, and returned on deck.

A most extraordinary and wonderful sight saluted me when I reached the poop.

The sun had risen behind the vast embankment of cloud, and its glorious rays, the orb itself being invisible, projected in a thousand lines of silver beyond the margin of the bank to the right and overhead, jutting out in visible threads, each as defined as a sunbeam in a dark room.

But the effect of this wonderful light was to render the canopy of cloud more horribly livid; and weird and startling was the contrast of the mild and far-reaching sunshine, streaming in lines of silver brightness into the steely sky, with the blue lightning ripping up the belly of the cloud and suffering the eye to dwell for an instant on the titanic strata of gloom that stood ponderously behind.

Nor was the ocean at this moment a less sombre and majestical object than the

heavens; for upon half of it rested a shadow deep as night, making the water sallow and thick, and most desolate to behold under the terrible curtain that lay close down to it upon the horizon; whilst all on the right the green sea sparkled in the sunbeams, heaving slowly under the calm that had fallen.

Looking far away on the weather beam, and where the shadow on the sea was deepest, I fancied that I discerned a black object, which might well be a ship with her sails darkened by her distance from the sun.

I pointed it out to Cornish, who saw it too, and I then fetched the telescope.

Judge of my surprise and consternation, when the outline of a boat with her sail low down on the mast, entered the field of the glass! I cried out, "It's the long-boat!"

Cornish turned hastily.

"My God!" he cried, "they're doomed men!"

I gazed at her intently, but could not be deceived, for I recognised the cut of the stu'nsail, lowered as it was in anticipation of the breaking of the storm, and I could also make out the minute dark figures of the men in her.

My surprise, however, was but momentary, for, considering the lightness of the wind that had prevailed all night, and the probability of her having stood to and fro in expectation of coming across us, or the quarter-boat which had attacked us, I had no reason to expect that they should have been far off.

The boatswain came along the quarter-deck singing out, "It's all right below! No fear of a leak there!"

"Come up here!" I cried. "There's the long-boat yonder!"

On hearing this, he ran aft as hard as he could and stared in the direction I indicated, but could not make her out until he had the glass to his eye, on which he exclaimed—

"Yes, it's her, sure enough. Why, we may have to make another fight for it. She's heading this way, and if she brings down any wind, by jingo she'll overhaul us."

"No, no," I answered. "They're not for fighting. They don't like the look of the weather, bo'sun, and would board us to save their lives, not to take ours."

"That's it, sir," exclaimed Cornish. "I reckon there's little enough mutineering among 'em now Stevens is gone. I'd lay my life they'd turn to and go to work just as I have if you'd lay by for 'em and take 'em in."

Neither the boatswain nor I made any reply to this.

For my own part, though we had been perishing for the want of more hands, I don't think I should have had trust enough in those rascals to allow them on board; for I could not doubt that when the storm was over, and they found themselves afloat in the *Grosvenor* once more, they would lay violent hands upon me and the boatswain, and treat us as they had treated Coxon and Duckling, revenging themselves in this way upon us for the death of Stevens and the other leaders of the mutiny, and likewise protecting themselves against their being carried to England and handed over to the authorities on shore as murderers.

The lightning was now growing very vivid, and for the first time I heard the sullen moan of thunder.

"That means," said the boatswain, "that it's a good bit off yet; and if that creature forrard 'll only bear a hand we shall be able

to get something to eat and drink afore it comes down."

However, as he spoke, the steward came aft with a big coffee-pot. He set it on the skylight, and fetched from the pantry some good preserved meat, biscuit and butter, and we fell to the repast with great relish and hunger.

Being the first to finish, I took the wheel while Cornish breakfasted, and then ordered the steward to go and make some fresh coffee, and keep it hot in the galley, and prepare a good breakfast for the Robertsons ready to serve when the young lady should leave her cabin.

"Bo'sun," said I, as he came slowly towards me, filling his pipe, "I don't like the look of that mainsail. It 'll blow out and kick up a deuce of a shindy. You and Cornish had better lay aloft with some spare line and serve the sail with it."

"That's soon done," he answered, cheerfully. And Cornish left his breakfast, and they both went aloft.

I yawned repeatedly as I stood at the wheel, and my eyes were sore for want of sleep.

But there was something in the aspect of that tremendous, stooping, quarter-sphere of cloud abeam of us, throwing a darkness most sinister to behold on half the sea, and vomiting quick lances of blue fire from its caverns, while now and again the thunder rolled solemnly, which was formidable enough to keep me wide awake.

It was growing darker every moment: already the sun's beams were obscured, though that portion of the great canopy of cloud which lay nearest to the luminary carried still a flaming edge.

A dead calm had fallen, and the ship rested motionless on the water.

The two men remained for a short time on the main-yard, and then came down, leaving the sail much more secure than they had found it. Cornish despatched his breakfast, and the boatswain came to me.

"Do you see the long-boat now, sir?"

"No," I replied; "she's hidden in the rain yonder. By Heaven! it *is* coming down!"

I did not exaggerate; the horizon was grey with the rain: it looked like steam rising from a boiling sea.

"It 'll keep 'em busy bailing," said the boatswain.

"Hold on here," I cried, "till I get my oilskins."

I was back again in a few moments, and he went away to drape himself for the downfall, and to advise Cornish to do the same.

I left the wheel for a second or two to

close one of the skylights, and as I did so a flash of lightning seemed to set the ship on fire, and immediately came a deafening crash of thunder. I think there is something more awful in the roar of thunder heard at sea than on shore, unless you are among mountains; you get the full intensity of it, the mighty outburst smiting the smooth surface of the water, which in itself is a wonderful vehicle of sound, and running onwards for leagues without meeting with any impediment to check or divert it.

I hastened to see if the lightning conductor ran clear to the water, and finding the end of the wire coiled up in the port main-chains, flung it overboard and resumed my place at the wheel.

Now that the vast surface of cloud was well forward of overhead, I observed that its front was an almost perfect semicircle,

the extremities at either point of the horizon projecting like horns. There still remained, embraced by these horns, a clear expanse of steel-coloured sky. *There* the sea was light, but all to starboard it was black, and the terrible shadow was fast bearing down upon the ship.

Crack! the lightning whizzed, and turned the deck, spars, and rigging into a network of blue fire. The peal that followed was a sudden explosion—a great dead crash, as though some mighty ponderous orb had fallen from the highest heaven upon the flooring of the sky and riven it.

Then I heard the rain.

I scarcely know which was the more terrifying to see and hear—the rain, or the thunder and lightning.

It was a cataract of water falling from a prodigious elevation. It was a dense, impervious liquid veil, shutting out all sight

of sea and sky. It tore the water into foam in striking it.

Then, *boom!* down it came upon us.

I held on by the wheel, and the boatswain jammed himself under the grating It was not rain only—it was hail as big as eggs; and the rain drops were as big as eggs too.

There was not a breath of air. This terrific fall came down in perfectly perpendicular lines; and as the lightning rushed through it, it illuminated with its ghastly effulgence a broad sheet of water.

It was so dark that I could not see the card in the binnacle. The water rushed off our decks just as it would had we shipped a sea. And for the space of twenty minutes I stood stunned, deaf, blind, in the midst of a horrible and overpowering concert of pealing thunder and rushing rain, the awful gloom being rendered yet more dreadful

by the dazzling flashes which passed through it.

It passed as suddenly as it had come, and left us still in a breathless calm, drenched, terrified, and motionless.

It grew lighter to windward, and I felt a small air blowing on my streaming face; lighter still, though to leeward the storm was raging and roaring, and passing with its darkness like some unearthly night.

I squeezed the water out of my eyes, and saw the wind come rushing towards us upon the sea, whilst all overhead the sky was a broad lead-coloured space.

"Now, bo'sun," I roared, "stand by!"

He came out from under the grating, and took a grip of the rail.

"Here it comes!" he cried; "and by the holy poker," he added, "here comes the long-boat atop of it!"

I could only cast one brief glance in the

direction indicated, where, sure enough, I saw the long-boat flying towards us on a surface of foam. In an instant the gale struck the ship and over she heeled, laying her port bulwark close down upon the water. But there she stopped.

"Had we had whole topsails," I cried, "it would have been Amen!"

I waited a moment or two before deciding whether to put the helm up and run. If this was the worst of it, the ship would do as she was. But in that time the long-boat, urged furiously forward by the sail they still kept on her, passed close under our stern. Twice, before she reached us, I saw them try to bring her so as to come alongside, and each time I held my breath, for I knew that the moment they brought her broadside to the wind she would capsize.

May God forbid that ever I should behold such a sight again!

It was indescribably shocking to see them swept helplessly past within hail of us. There were seven men in her. Two of them cried out and raved furiously, entreating with dreadful, mad gesticulations as they whirled past. But the rest, some clinging to the mast, others seated with their arms folded, were silent, like dead men already, with fixed and staring eyes—a ghastly crew. I saw one of the two raving men spring on to the gunwale, but he was instantly pulled down by another.

But what was there to see? It was a moment's horror—quick-vanishing as some monstrous object leaping into sight under a flash of lightning, then instantaneously swallowed up in the devouring gloom.

Our ship had got way upon her, and was surging forward with her lee-channels under water. The long-boat dwindled away on

our quarter, the spray veiling her as she fled, and in a few minutes was not to be distinguished upon the immeasurable bed of foam and wave, stretching down to the livid storm that still raged upon the far horizon.

"My God!" exclaimed Cornish, who stood near the wheel unnoticed by me. "I might ha' been in her! I might ha' been in her!"

And he covered his face with his hands, and sobbed and shook with the horror of the scene, and the agony of the thoughts it had conjured up.

CHAPTER II.

I HARDLY knew what to make of the weather, for though it blew very hard the wind was not so violent as it had been during those three days which I have written of in another part of this story.

The ship managed to hold her own well, with her head at west; I mean that she went scraping through the water, making very little lee-way, and so far she could fairly well carry the three close-reefed top-sails, though I believe that had another yard of canvas more than was already exposed been on her, she would have lain down and

never righted again, so violent was the first clap and outfly of the wind.

Nevertheless, I got the boatswain to take the wheel, and sent Cornish forward to stand by the fore-topsail sheets, whilst I kept by the mizzen, for I was not at all sure that the terrific thunder-storm that had broken over us was not the precursor of a hurricane, to come down at any moment on the gale that was already blowing, and wreck the ship out of hand.

In this way twenty minutes passed, when finding the wind to remain steady, I sang out to Cornish that he might come aft again. As I never knew the moment when a vessel might heave in sight I bent on the small ensign and ran it half-way up at the gaff end, not thinking it judicious to exhibit a train of flag-signals in so much wind. I then took the telescope, and, setting it steady in the mizzen rigging, slowly and

carefully swept the weather horizon, and afterwards transferred the glass to leeward, but no ship was to be seen.

"We ought to be in the track o' some sort o' wessels, too," exclaimed the boatswain, who had been awaiting the result of my inspections. "The steamers from Liverpool to New Orleans, and the West Indie mail-ships 'ud come right across this way, wouldn't they?"

"Not quite so far north," I answered. "But there ought to be no lack of sailing ships from all parts—from England to the southern ports of the United States and North America—from American ports to Rio and the eastern coast of South America. They cannot keep us long waiting. Something must heave in sight soon."

"Suppose we sight a wessel, what do you mean to do, sir?"

"Ask them to let me have a few men to work the ship to the nearest port."

"But suppose they're short-handed?"

"Then they won't oblige us."

"I can't see myself, sir," said he, "why, instead o' tryin' to fetch Bermuda, we shouldn't put the helm up and square away for England. How might the English Channel lie as we now are?"

"A trifle to the east'ard of north-east."

"Well, this here's a fair wind for it."

"That's true; but will you kindly remember that the ship's company consists of three men."

"Of four, countin' the steward, and five, countin' Miss Robertson."

"Of three men, I say, capable of working the vessel."

"Well, yes; you're right. Arter all, there's only three to go aloft."

"I suppose you know," I continued,

"that it would take a sailing ship, properly manned, four or five weeks to make the English Channel."

"Well, sir."

"Neither you, nor I, nor Cornish could do without sleep for four or five weeks."

"We could keep regular watches, Mr. Royle."

"I dare say we could; but we should have to let the ship remain under reefed topsails. But instead of taking four or five weeks, we should take four or five months to reach England under close-reefed topsails, unless we could keep a gale of wind astern of us all the way. I'll tell you what it is, bo'sun, these exploits are very pretty, and appear very possible in books, and persons who take anything that is told them about the sea as likely and true, believe they can be accomplished. And on one or two occasions they have been accomplished.

Also I have heard on one occasion a gentleman made a voyage from Timor to Bathurst Island on the back of a turtle. But the odds, in my unromantic opinion, are a thousand to one against our working the ship home as we are, unless we can ship a crew on the road, and very shortly. And how can we be sure of this? There is scarce a ship goes to sea now that is not short-handed. We may sight fifty vessels, and get no help from one of them. They may all be willing to take us on board if we abandon the *Grosvenor;* but they'll tell us that they can give us no assistance to work her. Depend upon it, our wisest course is to make Bermuda. There, perhaps, we may pick up some hands. But if we head for England in this trim—a deep ship, with heavy gear to work, and but two seamen to depend upon, if the third has to take the wheel, trusting to chance to help

us, I repeat that the odds against our bringing the ship home are one thousand to one. We shall be at the mercy of every gale that rises, and end in becoming a kind of phantom ship, chased about the ocean just as the wind happens to blow us."

"Well, sir," said he, "I dare say you're right, and I'll say no more about it. Now, about turnin' in. I'll keep here if you like to go below for a couple of hours. Cornish can stand by to rouse you up."

I had another look to windward before making up my mind to go below. A strong sea was rising, and the wind blew hard enough to keep one leaning against it. There was no break in the sky, and the horizon was thick, but the look-out was not worse than it had been half an hour before.

We were, however, snug enough aloft, if not very neat; the bunt of the mainsail,

indeed, looked rather shaky, but the other sails lay very secure upon the yards; and this being so, and the gale remaining steady, I told the boatswain to keep the ship to her present course, and went below, yawning horribly and dead wearied.

I had slept three-quarters of an hour, when I was awakened by the steward rushing into my cabin and hauling upon me like a madman. Being scarcely conscious, I imagined that the mutineers had got on board again, and that here was one of them falling upon me; and having sense enough, I suppose, in my sleepy brain to make me determine to sell my life at a good price, I let fly at the steward's breast and struck him so hard that he roared out, which sound brought me to my senses at once.

"What is it?" I cried.

"Oh, sir," responded the steward, half dead with terror and the loss of breath

occasioned by my blow, "the ship's sinking, sir! We're all going down! I've been told to fetch you up. The Lord have mercy upon us!"

I rolled on to the deck in my hurry to leave the bunk, and ran with all my speed up the companion ladder; nor was the ascent difficult, for the ship was on a level keel, pitching heavily indeed, but rolling slightly.

Scarcely, however, was my head up through the companion, when I thought it would have been blown off my shoulders. The fury and force of the wind was such as I had never before in all my life experienced.

Both the boatswain and Cornish were at the wheel, and, in order to reach them, I had to drop upon my hands and knees and crawl along the deck. When near them I took a grip of the grating and looked around me.

The first thing I saw was that the main-sail had blown away from most of the gaskets, and was thundering in a thousand rags upon the yard. The foresail was split in halves, and the port mizzen-topsail sheet had carried away, and the sail was pealing like endless discharges of musketry.

All the spars were safe still. The lee braces had been let go, the helm put up, and the ship was racing before a hurricane as furious as a tornado, heading south-east, with a wilderness of foam boiling under her bows.

This, then, was the real gale which the thunder-storm had been nearly all night bringing up. The first gale was but a summer breeze compared to it.

The clouds lay like huge fantastic rolls of sheet lead upon the sky; in some quarters of the circle drooping to the water-line in patches and spaces ink-black. No fragment

of blue heaven was visible; and yet it was lighter than it had been when I went below.

The ensign, half-masted, roared over my head; the sea was momentarily growing heavier, and, as the ship pitched, she took the water in broad sheets over her forecastle.

The terrible beating of the mizzen-topsail was making the mizzen-mast, from the mastcoat to the royal masthead, jump like a piece of whalebone. Although deafened, bewildered, and soaked through with the screaming of the gale, the thunder of the torn canvas, and the spray which the wind tore out of the sea and hurtled through the air, I still preserved my senses; and perceiving that the mizzen-topmast would go if the sail were not got rid of, I crawled on my hands and knees to the foot of the mast, and let go the remaining sheet.

With appalling force, and instantaneously, the massive chain was torn through the sheave-hole, and in less time than I could have counted ten, one half the sail had blown into the main-top, and the rest streamed like the ends of whipcord from the yard.

I crawled to the fore-end of the poop to look at the mainmast; that stood steady; but whilst I watched the foremast, the fore-sail went to pieces, and the leaping and plunging of the heavy blocks upon it made the whole mast quiver so violently that the top-gallant and royal-mast bent to and fro like a bow strung and unstrung quickly.

I waited some moments, debating whether or not to let go the fore-topsail sheets; but reflecting that the full force of the wind was kept away from it by the main-topsail, and that it would certainly blow to pieces if I touched a rope belonging

to it, I dropped on my hands and knees again and crawled away aft.

"I saw it coming!" roared the bo'sun in my ear. "I had just time to sing out to Cornish to slacken the lee-braces, and to put the helm hard over."

"We shall never be able to run!" I bellowed back. "She'll be pooped as sure as a gun when the sea comes! We must heave her to whilst we can. No use thinking of the fore-topsail—it must go!"

"Look there!" shouted Cornish, dropping the spokes with one hand to point.

There was something indeed to look at; one of the finest steamers I had ever seen, brig-rigged, hove to under a main-staysail. She seemed, so rapidly were we reeling through the water, to rise out of the sea.

She lay with her bowsprit pointing across our path, just on our starboard bow. Lying as she was, without way on her, we

should have run into her had the weather been thick, as surely as I live to say so.

We slightly starboarded the helm, clearing her by the time we were abreast by not more than a quarter of a mile. But we dared not have hauled the ship round another point; for, with our braces all loose, the first spilling of the sails would have brought the yards aback, in which case indeed we might have called upon God to have mercy on our souls, for the ship would not have lived five minutes.

There was something fascinating in the spectacle of that beautiful steamship, rolling securely in the heavy sea, revealing as she went over to starboard her noble graceful hull, to within a few feet of her keel. But there was also something unspeakably dreadful to us to see help so close at hand, and yet of no more use than had it offered a thousand miles away.

There was a man on her bridge, and others doubtless watched our vessel unseen by us; and God knows what sensations must have been excited in them by the sight of our torn and whirling ship blindly rushing before the tempest, her sails in rags, the half-hoisted ensign bitterly illustrating our miserable condition, and appealing, with a power and pathos no human cry could express, for help which could not be given.

"Let us try and heave her to now!" I shrieked, maddened by the sight of this ship whirling fast away on our quarter. "We can lie by her until the gale has done and then she will help us!"

But the boatswain could not control the wheel alone: the blows of the sea against the rudder made it hard for even four pairs of hands to hold the wheel steady. I rushed to the companion and bawled for the

steward, and when, after a long pause, he emerged, no sooner did the wind hit him than he rolled down the ladder.

I sprang below, hauled him up by the collar of his jacket, and drove him with both hands to his stern up to the wheel.

"Hold on to these spokes!" I roared. And then Cornish and I ran staggering along the poop.

"Get the end of the starboard main-brace to the capstan!" I cried to him. "Look alive! ship one of the bars ready!"

And then I scrambled as best I could down on the main-deck, and went floundering forward through the water that was now washing higher than my ankle to the fore-topsail halliards, which I let go.

Crack! whiz! away went the sail, strips of it flying into the sea like smoke.

I struggled back again on to the poop, but the violence of the wind was almost

more than I could bear: it beat the breath out of me; it stung my face just as if it were filled with needles; it roared in my ears; it resembled a solid wall; it rolled me off my knees and hands, and obliged me to drag myself against it bit by bit, by whatever came in my road to hold on to.

Cornish lay upon the deck with the end of the main-brace in his hands, having taken the necessary turns with it around the capstan.

I laid my weight against the bar and went to work, and scrambling and panting, beaten half dead by the wind, and no more able to look astern without protecting my eyes with my hands than I could survey any object in a room full of blinding smoke, I gradually got the mainyard round, but found I had not the strength to bring it close to the mast.

I saw the boatswain speak to the steward,

who left the wheel to help me with his weight against the capstan bar.

I do think at that moment that the boatswain transformed himself into an immovable figure of iron. Heaven knows from what measureless inner sources he procured the temporary strength: he clenched his teeth, and the muscles in his hands rose like bulbs as he hung to the wheel and pitted his strength against the blows of the seas upon the rudder.

Brave, honest fellow! a true seaman, a true Englishman! Well would it be for sailors were there more of his kind among them to set them examples of honest labour, noble self-sacrifice, and duty ungrudgingly performed!

The seas struck the ship heavily as she rounded to. I feared that she would have too much head-sail to lie close, for the foresail and fore-topsail were in ribbons—

they might show enough roaring canvas when coupled with the fore-topmast staysail to make her pay off, we having no after-sail set to counterbalance the effect of them.

However, she lay steady, that is, as the compass goes, but rolled fearfully, wallowing deep like a ship half full of water, and shipped such tremendous seas that I constantly expected to hear the crash of the galley stove in.

I now shaded my eyes to look astern; not hoping, indeed, to see the steamer near, but expecting at least to find her in sight. But the horizon was a dull blank: not a sign of the vessel to be seen, nothing but the rugged line of water, and the nearer deep dark under the shadow of the leaden pouring clouds.

CHAPTER III.

In bringing the ship close to the wind in this terrible gale, without springing a spar, we had done what I never should have believed practicable to four men, taking into consideration the size of the ship and the prodigious force of the wind; and when I looked aloft and considered that only a few hours before, so to speak, the ship was carrying all the sail that could be put upon her, and that three men had stripped her of it and put her under a close-reefed main-topsail fit to encounter a raging hurricane, I could not help thinking that we had a

right to feel proud of our endurance and spirit.

There was no difficulty now in holding the wheel, and, had no worse sea than was now running been promised us, the helm might have been lashed and the vessel lain as comfortably as a smack with her foresail over to windward.

The torn sails were making a hideous noise on the yards forward, and as there was no earthly reason why this clamour should be suffered to last, I called to Cornish to get his knife ready and help me to cut the canvas away from the jackstays. We hauled the braces taut to steady the yards, and then went aloft, and in ten minutes severed the fragments of the foresail and topsail, and they blew up into the air like paper, and were carried nearly half a mile before they fell into the sea.

The wind was killing up aloft, and I was

heartily glad to get on deck again, not only to escape the wind, but on account of the fore-topmast and top-gallant mast, both of which had been heavily tried, and now rocked heavily as the ship rolled, and threatened to come down with the weight of the yards upon them.

But neither Cornish nor I had strength enough in us to stay the masts more securely; our journey aloft and our sojourn on the yards, and our fight with the wind to maintain our hold, had pretty well done for us; and in Cornish I took notice of that air of lassitude and dull indifference which creeps upon shipwrecked men when worn out with their struggles, and which resembles in its way the stupor which falls upon persons who are perishing of cold.

It was fair, however, since I had had some rest, that I should now take a spell at the wheel, and I therefore told Cornish to

go to the cabin lately occupied by Stevens, the ship's carpenter, and turn in, and then crawled aft to the poop and desired the boatswain to go below and rest himself, and order the steward, who had not done one-tenth of the work we had performed, to stand by ready to come on deck if I should call to him.

I was now alone on deck, in the centre, so it seemed when looking around the horizon, of a great storm, which was fast lifting the sea into mountains.

I took a turn round the spokes of the wheel and secured the tiller ropes to steady the helm, and held on, crouching to windward, so that I might get some shelter from the murderous force of the wind by the slanting deck and rail.

I could better now realize our position than when at work, and the criticalness of it struck and awed me like a revelation.

I cast my eyes upon the main-topsail, and inspected it anxiously, as on this sail our lives might depend. If it blew away the only sail remaining would be the fore-top-mast staysail. In all probability the ship's head would at once pay off, let me keep the helm jammed down as hard as I pleased; the vessel would then drive before the seas, which, as she had not enough canvas on her to keep her running at any speed, would very soon topple over her stern, sweep the decks fore and aft, and render her unmanageable.

There was likewise the further danger of the fore-topmast going, the whole weight of the staysail being upon it. If this went it would take that sail with it, and the ship would round into the wind's eye and drive away astern.

Had there been more hands on board I should not have found these speculations so

alarming. My first job would have been to get some of the cargo out of the hold and pitch it overboard, so as to lighten the ship, for the dead weight in her made her strain horribly. Then with men to help it would have been easy to get the storm trysail on if the topsail blew away, clap preventer backstays on to the foremast and fore-topmast, and rouse them taut with tackles, and send down the royal and top-gallant yards, so as to ease the masts of the immense leverage of these spars.

But what could four men do—one of the four being almost useless, and all four exhausted not by the perils and labour of the storm only, but by the fight they had had to make for their lives against fellow-beings?

Alone on deck, with the heavy seas splashing and thundering, and precipitating their volumes of water over the ship's side,

with the gale howling and roaring through the skies, I grew bitterly despondent. It seemed as if God Himself were against me, that I was the sport of some remorseless fate, whereby I was led from one peril to another, from one suffering to another, and no mercy to be shown me until death gave me rest.

And yet I was sensible of no revolt and inward rage against what I deemed my destiny. My being and individuality were absorbed and swallowed up in the power and immensity of the tempest, like a raindrop in the sea. I was overwhelmed by the vastness of the dangers which surrounded me, by the sense of the littleness and insignificance of myself and my companions in the midst of this spacious theatre of warring winds, and raging seas, and far-reaching sky of pouring cloud. I felt as though all the forces of nature were directed

against my life; and those cries which my heart would have sent up in the presence of dangers less tumultuous and immense were silenced by a kind of dull amazement, of heavy passive bewilderment, which numbed my mind and forced upon me an indifference to the issue without depriving me of the will and energy to avert it.

I held my post at the wheel, being anxious that the boatswain and Cornish should recruit their strength by sleep, for if one or the other of them broke down, then, indeed, our case would be deplorable.

The force of the wind was stupendous, and yet the brave main-topsail stood it; but not an hour had passed since the two men went below when a monster wave took the ship on the starboard bow and threw her up, rolling at the same time an immense body of water on to the decks; her stern, where I was crouching, sank in the hollow

level with the sea, then as the leviathan wave rolled under her counter, the ship's bows fell into a prodigious trough with a sickening, whirling swoop. Ere she could recover, another great sea rolled right upon her, burying her forecastle, and rushing with the fury of a cataract along the main-deck.

Another wave of that kind, and our fate was sealed.

But happily these were exceptional seas; smaller waves succeeded, and the struggling, straining ship showed herself alive still.

Alive, but maimed. That tremendous swoop had carried away the jibboom, and the fore top-gallant mast — the one close against the bowsprit head, the other a few inches above the top-gallant yard. The mast, with the royal yard upon it, hung all in a heap against the fore-topmast, but fortunately kept steady, owing to the yard-

arm having jammed itself into the fore-topmast rigging. The jibboom was clean gone adrift and was washing away to leeward.

This was no formidable accident, though it gave the ship a wrecked and broken look. I should have been well-pleased to see all three top-gallant masts go over the side, for the weight of the yards, swaying to and fro at great angles, was too much for the lower-masts, and not only strained the decks, but the planking to which the chain-plates were bolted.

My great anxiety now was for the fore-topmast, which was sustaining the weight of the broken mast and yard, in addition to the top-gallant yard, still standing, and the heavy pulling of the fore-topmast stay-sail.

Dreading the consequences that might follow the loss of this sail, I called to the

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steward at the top of my voice, and on his thrusting his head up the companion, I bade him rouse up Cornish and the boatswain, and send them on deck.

In a very short time they both arrived, and the boatswain, on looking forward, immediately comprehended our position and anticipated my order.

"The topmast 'll go!" he roared in my ear. "Better let go the staysail-halliards, and make a short job o' it."

"Turn to and do it at once," I replied. Away they skurried. I lost sight of them when they were once off the poop, and it seemed an eternity before they showed themselves again on the forecastle.

No wonder! They had to wade and struggle through a rough sea on the main-deck, which obliged them to hold on, for minutes at a time, to whatever they could put their hands to.

I wanted them to bear a hand in getting rid of the staysail, for, with the wheel hard down, the ship showed a tendency to fall off. But it was impossible for me to make my voice heard; I could only wave my hand; the boatswain understood the gesture, and I saw him motion to Cornish to clear off the forecastle. He then ran over to leeward and let go the fore-topmast staysail sheet and halliards, and, this done, he could do no more but take to his heels.

The hullabaloo was frightful—the thundering of the sails, the snapping and cracking of the sheets.

Boom! I knew it must follow. It was a choice of two evils—to poop the ship or lose a mast.

Down came the topmast, splintering and crashing with a sound that rose above the roar of the gale, and in a minute was swinging against the shrouds—an awful wreck to

behold in such a scene of raging sea and buried decks.

I knew well now what ought to be done, and done without delay; for the staysail was in the water, ballooning out to every wave, and dragging the ship's head round more effectually than had the sail been set.

But I had a wonderful ally in the boatswain—keen, unerring, and intrepid, a consummate sailor. I should never have had the heart to give him the order; and yet there he was, and Cornish by his side, at work, knife in hand, cutting and hacking away for dear life.

A long and perilous job indeed!—now up aloft, now down, soaked by the incessant seas that thundered over the ship's bows, tripping over the raffle that encumbered the deck, actually swarming out on the bowsprit with their knives between their teeth, at moments plunged deep in the sea, yet

busy again as they were lifted high in the air.

I draw my breath as I write. I have the scene before me: I see the ropes parting under the knives of the men. I close my eyes as I behold once more the boiling wave that buries them, and dare not look, lest I should find them gone. I hear the hooting of the hurricane, the groaning of the over-loaded vessel, and over all the faint hurrah those brave spirits utter as the last rope is severed and the unwieldly wreck of spars and cordage falls overboard and glides away upon a running sea, and the ship comes to again under my hand, and braves, with her bows almost at them, the merciless onslaught of the huge green waves.

Only the day before, one of these men was a mutineer, blood-stained already, and prepared for new murders!

Strange translation! from base villainy to actions heroical! But those who know sailors best will least doubt their capacity of gauging extremes.

CHAPTER IV.

By the loss of the fore-topmast the ship was greatly eased. In almost every sea that we had encountered since leaving England, I had observed the immense leverage exerted over the deep-lying hull by the weight of her lofty spars; and by the effect which the carrying away of the fore-topmast had produced, I had no doubt that our position would be rendered far less critical, while the vessel would rise to the waves with much greater ease, if we could rid her of a portion of her immense top-weight.

I waited until the boatswain came aft, and then surrendered the wheel to Cornish;

after which I crouched with the boatswain under the lee of the companion, where, at least, we could hear each other's voices.

"She pitches easier since that fore-top-mast went, bo'sun. There is still too much top-hamper. The main-royal stay is gone, and the mast can't stand long, I think, unless we stay it forrard again. But we mustn't lose the topmast."

"No, we can't do without him. Yet there's a risk of him goin' too, if you cut away the top-gall'nt backstays. What's to prevent him?" said he, looking up at the mast.

"Oh, I know how to prevent it," I replied. "I'll go aloft with a hand-saw and wound the mast. What do you think? Shall we let it carry away?"

"Yes," he replied promptly. "She'll be another ship with them masts out of her. If it comes on fine we'll make shift to bend

on the new foresail, and get a jib on her by a stay from the lower mast-head to the bowsprit end. Then," he continued, calculating on his fingers, "we shall have the main-topmast stays'l, mizzen-topmast stays'l, main-topsail, mains'l, mizzen, mizzen-tops'l, —six and two makes height—height sails on her—a bloomin' show o' canvas!"

He ran his eye aloft, and said emphatically—

"I'm for lettin' of 'em go, most sartinly."

I got up, but he caught hold of my arm.

"I'll go aloft," said he.

"No, no," I replied, "it's my turn. You stand by to cut away the lanyards to leeward, and then get to windward and wait for me. We must watch for a heavy lurch, for we don't want the spars to fall amidships and drive a hole through the deck."

Saying which I got off the poop and made for the cabin lately shared between

the carpenter and the boatswain, where I should find a saw in the tool chest.

I crept along the main-deck to leeward, but was washed off my feet in spite of every precaution, and thrown with my head against the bulwark, but the blow was more bewildering than hurtful. Fortunately, everything was secure, so there were no pounding casks and huge spars driving about like battering rams, to dodge.

I found a saw, and also laid hold of the sounding-rod, so that I might try the well, being always very distrustful of the boatswain's plugs in the fore hold; but on drawing up the rod out of the sounding-pipe, I found there were not above five to six inches of water in her, and, as the pumps sucked at four inches, I had not only the satisfaction of knowing that the ship was tight in her hull, but that she was draining in very little water from her decks.

This discovery of the ship's soundness filled me with joy, and, thrusting the saw down my waistcoat, I sprang into the main-rigging with a new feeling of life in me.

I could not help thinking as I went ploughing and clinging my way up the ratlins, that the hurricane was less furious than it had been an hour ago; but this, I dare say, was more my hope than my conviction, for, exposed as I now was to the full force of the wind, its power and outcry were frightful. There were moments when it jammed me so hard against the shrouds that I could not have stirred an inch—no, not to save my life.

I remember once reading an account of the wreck of a vessel called the *Wager*, where it was told that so terrible was the appearance of the sea that many of the sailors went raving mad with fear at the

sight of it, some throwing themselves overboard in their delirium, and others falling flat on the deck and rolling to and fro with the motion of the ship, without making the smallest effort to help themselves.

I believe that much such a sea as drove those poor creatures wild was spread below me now, and I can only thank Almighty God for giving me the courage to witness the terrible spectacle without losing my reason.

No words that I am master of could submit the true picture of this whirling, mountainous, boiling scene to you. The waves, fore-shortened to my sight by my elevation above them, drew nevertheless a deeper shadow into their caverns, so that, so lively was this deception of colouring, each time the vessel's head fell into one of these hollows, it seemed as though she were plunging into a measureless abysm, as roaring and awful as a maelström, from which

it would be impossible for her to rise in time to lift to the next great wave that was rushing upon her.

When, after incredible toil, I succeeded in gaining the cross-trees, I paused for some moments to recover breath, during which I looked, with my fingers shading my eyes, carefully all round the horizon, but saw no ship in sight.

The topmast was pretty steady, but the top-gallant mast rocked heavily, owing to the main-royal stay being carried away; moreover, the boatswain had already let go the royal and top-gallant braces, so that they might run out when the mast fell, and leave it free to go overboard; and the yards swinging in the wind and to the plunging of the ship, threatened every moment to bring down the whole structure of masts, including all or a part of the topmast, so that I was in the greatest peril.

In order, therefore, to lose no time, I put my knife in my teeth, and shinned up the top-gallant rigging, where, holding on with one hand, I cut the top-gallant stay adrift, though the strands were so hard that I thought I should never accomplish the job. This support being gone, the mast jumped wildly, insomuch that I commended my soul to God, every instant believing that I should be shaken off the mast or that it would go overboard with me.

However, I succeeded in sliding down again into the cross-trees, and having cut away the top-gallant rigging to leeward, I pulled out my saw and went to work at the mast with it, sawing the mast just under the yard, so that it might go clean off at that place.

When I had sawed deep enough, I cut away the weather rigging and got down into the maintop as fast as ever I could, and

sung out to the boatswain to cut away to leeward.

By the time I reached the deck, all was adrift to leeward, and the mast was now held in its place by the weather backstays. I dropped into the chains and there helped the boatswain with my knife, and, watching an opportunity when the ship rolled heavily to leeward, we cut through the lanyards of the top-gallant backstay, and the whole structure of spar, yards, and rigging went flying overboard.

Encouraged by the success of these operations, and well knowing that a large measure of our safety depended upon our easing the ship of her top-hamper, I sung out that we would now cut away the mizzen top-gallant mast, and once more went aloft, though the boatswain begged hard to take my place this time.

This spar, being much lighter and smaller,

did not threaten me so dangerously as the other had done, and in a tolerably short space of time we had sent it flying overboard after the main top-gallant mast; and all this we did without further injury to ourselves than a temporary deprivation of strength and breath.

The ship had now the appearance of a wreck; and yet in her mutilated condition was safer than she had been at any moment since the gale first sprang up. The easing her of all this top-weight seemed to make her as buoyant as though we had got a hundred tons of cargo out of her. Indeed, I was now satisfied, providing everything stood, and the wind did not increase in violence, that she would be able to ride out the gale.

Cornish (as well as the boatswain and myself) was soaked through and through; we therefore arranged that the boatswain

and I should go below and shift our clothes, and that the boatswain should then relieve Cornish.

So down we went, I, for one, terribly exhausted, but cheered all the same by an honest hope that we should save our lives and the ship after all.

I stepped into the pantry to swallow a dram so as to get my nerves together, for I was trembling all over with the weariness in me, and cold as ice on the skin from the repeated dousings I had received; and then changed my clothes; and never was anything more comforting and grateful than the feel of the dry flannel and the warm stockings and sea-boots which I exchanged for shoes that sopped like brown paper and came to pieces in my hand when I pulled them off.

The morning was far advanced, a little past eleven. I was anxious to ask Miss

Robertson how she did, and reassure her as to our position before going on deck to take observations, and therefore went to her cabin door and listened, meaning to knock and ask her leave to see her if I heard her voice in conversation with her father.

I strained my ear, but the creaking and groaning of the ship inside, and the bellowing of the wind outside, were so violent, that had the girl been singing at the top of her voice I do not believe that I should have heard her.

I longed to see her, and shook the handle of the door, judging that she would distinguish this sound amid the other noises which prevailed, and, sure enough, the door opened, and her sweet face looked out.

She showed herself fully when she saw me, and came into the cuddy, and was going to address me, but a look of agonized sorrow came into her face; she dropped on

her knees before the bench at the table and buried her head, and never was there an attitude of grief more expressive of piteous misery than this.

My belief was that the frightful rolling of the ship had crazed her brain, and that she fancied I had come to tell her we were sinking.

Not to allow this false impression to affect her an instant longer than could be helped, I dropped on one knee by her side, and at once told her that the ship had been eased, and was riding well, and that the gale, as I believed, was breaking.

She shook her head, still keeping her face buried, as though she would say that it was not the danger we were in that had given her that misery.

"Tell me what has happened?" I exclaimed. "Your troubles and trials have been very, very great—too great for you to

bear, brave and true-hearted as you are. It unmans me and breaks me down to see you in this attitude. For your own sake, keep up your courage a little longer. The first ship that passes when this gale abates will take us on board; and there are three of us still with you who will never yield an inch to any danger that may come whilst their life holds out and yours remains to be saved."

She upturned her pale face, streaming with tears, and said the simple words, but in a tone I shall never forget—"Papa is dead!"

Was it so, indeed?

And was I so purblind as to wrong her beautiful and heroic character by supposing her capable of being crazed with fears for her own life.

I rose from her side, and stood looking at her in silence. I had nothing to say.

However dangerous our situation might

have been, I should still have known how to comfort and encourage her.

But—her father was dead !

This was a blow I could not avert—a sorrow no labour could remit. It struck home hard to me.

I took her hand and raised her, and entered the cabin hand in hand with her. The moisture of the deck dulled the transparency of the bull's-eye, but sufficient light was admitted through the port-hole to enable me to see him. He was as white as a sheet, and his hair frosted his head, and made him resemble a piece of marble carving. His under jaw had dropped, and that was the great and prominent signal of the thing that had come to him.

Poor old man ! lying dead under the coarse blanket, with his thin hands folded, as though he had died in prayer, and a most peaceful holy calm in his face !

Was it worth while bringing him from the wreck for this?

"God was with him when he died," I said, and I closed his poor eyes as tenderly as my rough hands would let me.

She looked at him, speechless with grief, and then burst into an uncontrollable fit of crying.

My love and tenderness, my deep pity of her lonely helplessness, were all so great an impulse in me that I took her in my arms and held her whilst she sobbed upon my shoulder. I am sure that she knew my sorrow was deep and real, and that I held her to my heart that she might not feel her loneliness.

When her great outburst of grief was passed, I made her sit; and then she told me that when she had left the deck, she had looked at her father before lying down, and thought him sleeping very calmly. He

was not dead then. Oh, no! she had noticed by the motion of the covering on him that he was breathing peacefully. Being very tired she had fallen asleep quickly, and slept soundly. She awoke, not half an hour before she heard me trying the handle of the door. The rolling and straining of the ship frightened her, and she heard one of the masts go overboard. She got out of bed, meaning to call her father, so that he might be ready to follow her, if the ship were sinking (as she believed it was), on to the deck, but could not wake him. She took him by the arm, and this bringing her close to his face, she saw that he was dead. She would have called me, but dreaded to leave the cabin lest she should be separated from her father. Meanwhile she heard the fall of another mast alongside, and the ship at the moment rolling heavily, she believed the vessel

actually sinking, and flung herself upon her father's body, praying to God that her death might be mercifully speedy, and that the waves might not separate them in death.

At this point she broke down and cried again bitterly.

When I came to think over what she had gone through during that half hour—the dead body of her father before her, of him whose life a few hours before she had no serious fear of, and the bitterness of death which she had tasted in the dreadful persuasion that the vessel was sinking, I was too much affected to speak. I could only hold her hands and caress them, wondering in my heart that God who loves and blesses all things that are good and pure, should single out this beautiful, helpless, heroic girl for suffering so complicated and miserable.

After a while I explained that it was

necessary I should leave her, as I was desirous of observing the position of the sun, and promised, if no new trouble detained me on deck, to return to her as soon as I had completed my observations.

So without further words I came away and got my sextant, and went on deck.

I found Cornish still at the wheel, and the boatswain leaning over the weather side of the ship about half-way down the poop, watching the hull of the vessel as she rolled and plunged. I might have saved myself the trouble of bringing the sextant with me, for there was not only no sign of the sun now, but no promise of its showing itself even for a minute. Three impenetrable strata of cloud obscured the heavens: the first, a universal mist or thickness, tolerably bright as it lay nearest the sun; beneath this, ranges of heavier clouds, which had the appearance of being stationary, owing

to the speed at which the ponderous smoke-coloured clouds composing the lowest stratum were swept past them. Under this whirling gloomy sky the sea was tossing in mountains, and between sea and cloud the storm was sweeping with a stupendous voice, and with a power so great that no man on shore who could have experienced its fury there, would believe that anything afloat could encounter it and live.

I remained until noon anxiously watching the sky, hoping that the outline of the sun might swim out, if for a few moments only, and give me a chance to fix it.

I was particularly wishful to get sights, because, if the wind abated, we might be able to wear the ship and stand for the Bermudas, which was the land the nearest to us that I knew of. But I could not be certain as to the course to be steered unless I knew my latitude and longitude. The

Grosvenor, now hove to in this furious gale, was drifting dead to leeward at from three to four knots an hour. Consequently, if the weather remained thick and this monstrous sea lasted, I should be out of my reckoning altogether next day. This was the more to be deplored, as every mile was of serious consequence to persons in our position, as it would represent so many hours more of hard work and bitter expectation.

The boatswain had by this time taken the wheel, to let Cornish go below to change his clothes, and, as no conversation could be carried on in that unsheltered part of the deck, I reserved what I had to say to him for another opportunity, and returned to the cuddy.

I could not bear to think of the poor girl being alone with her dead father in the darksome cabin, where the grief of death

would be augmented by the dismaying sounds of the groaning timbers and the furious wash of the water against the ship's side.

I went to her and begged her to come to me to my own cabin, which, being to windward and having two bull's-eyes in the deck, was lighter and more cheerful than hers.

"Your staying here," I said, "cannot recall your poor father to life, and I know, if he were alive, he would wish me to take you away. He will rest quietly here, Miss Robertson, and we will close the cabin door and leave him for a while."

I drew her gently from the cabin, and when I had got her into the cuddy, I closed the door upon the dead old man, and led her by the hand to my own cabin.

"I intend," I said, "that you shall occupy this berth, and I will remove into the cabin next to this."

She answered in broken tones that she could not bear the thought of being separated from her father.

"But you will not be separated from him," I answered, "even though you should never see him more with your eyes. There is only one separation, and that is when the heart turns and the memory forgets. He will always be with you in your thoughts, a dear friend, a dear companion, and father, as in life; not absent because he is dead, since I think that death makes those whom we love doubly our own, for they become spirits to watch over us, to dwell near us, let us journey where we please, and their affection is not to be chilled by any worldly selfishness. Try to think thus of the dead. It is not a parting that should pain us. Your father has set out on his journey before you; death is but a short leave-taking, and only a man who is doomed

to live for ever could look upon death as an eternal separation."

She wept quietly, and once or twice looked at me as though she would smile through her tears, to let me know that she was grateful for my poor attempts to console her; but she could not smile. Rough and idle as my words were, yet, in the fulness of my sympathy, and my knowledge of her trials, and my sense of the dangers which, even as I spoke, were raging round us, my voice faltered, and I turned to hide my face.

It happened then that my eye lighted upon the little Bible I had carried with me in all my voyages ever since I had gone to sea, and I felt that now, with the old man lying dead, and his poor child's grief, and our own hard and miserable position, was the fitting time to invoke God's mercy, and to pray to Him to watch over us.

I spoke to that effect to Miss Robertson, and said that if she consented I would call in Cornish and the steward and ask them to join us; that the boatswain was at the wheel and could not leave his post, but we might believe that the Almighty would accept the brave man's faithful discharge of his duty as a prayer, and would not overlook him, if our prayers were accepted, because he could not kneel in company with us.

"Let him know that we are praying," she exclaimed, eagerly, "and he will pray too."

I saw that my suggestion had aroused her, and at once left the cabin and went on deck, and going close to the boatswain I said—

"Poor Mr. Robertson is dead, and his daughter is in great grief."

"Ah, poor lady!" he replied. "I hope

God 'll spare her. She's a brave young woman, and seen a sight more trouble within the last fortnight than so pretty a gell desarves."

"Bo'sun, I am going to call in Cornish and the steward, and read prayers and ask God for His protection. I should have liked you, brave old messmate, to join; but, as you can't leave the deck, pray with us in your heart, will you?"

"Ay, ay, that I will, heartily; an' I hope for the lady's sake that God Almighty 'll hear us, for I'd sooner die myself than she should, poor gell, for I'm older, and it's my turn afore hers by rights."

I clapped him on the back and went below, where I called to the steward and Cornish, both of whom came aft on hearing my voice.

During my absence, Miss Robertson had taken the Bible and laid it open on the

table; and when the two men came in I said—

"My lads, we are in the hands of God, who is our Father; and I will ask you to join this lady and me in thanking Him for the mercy and protection He has already vouchsafed us, and to pray to Him to lead us out of present peril and bring us safely to the home we love."

The steward said "Yes, sir," and looked about him for a place to sit or kneel, but Cornish hung his head and glanced at the door shamefacedly.

"You need not stop unless you wish, Cornish," said I. "But why should you not join us? The way you have worked, the honest manner in which you have behaved, amply atone for the past. From no man can more than hearty repentance be expected, and we all stand in need of each other's prayers. Join us, mate."

"Won't it be makin' a kind of game o' religion for the likes o' me to pray?" he answered. "I was for murderin' you an' the lady and all hands as are left on board this wessel—what 'ud be the use o' *my* prayers?"

Miss Robertson went over to him and took his hand.

"God," said she, "has told us that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. But who is good among us, Cornish? Be sure that as you repent so are you forgiven. My poor father lies dead in his cabin, and I wish you to pray with me for him, and to pray with us for our own poor lives. Mr. Royle," she said, "Cornish will stay."

And with an expression on her face of infinite sweetness and pathos, she drew him to one of the cushioned lockers and seated herself by his side.

I saw that her charming wonderful grace, her cordial tender voice, and her condescension, which a man of his condition would feel, had deeply moved him.

The steward seated himself on the other side of her, and I began to read from the open book before me, beginning the chapter which she had chosen for us during my absence on deck. This chapter was the eleventh of St. John, wherein is related the story of that sickness "which was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

I read only to the thirty-sixth verse, for what followed that did not closely apply to our position; but there were passages preceding it which stirred me to the centre of my heart, knowing how they went home to the mourner, more especially those pregnant lines—"Martha saith unto Him, I know

that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," which made me feel that the words I had formerly addressed to her were not wholly idle.

I then turned to St. Matthew, and read from the eighth chapter those few verses wherein it is told that Christ entered a ship with His disciples, and that there arose a great storm. Only men in a tempest at sea, their lives in jeopardy, and worn out with anxiety and the fear of death, know how great is the comfort to be got out of this brief story of our Lord's power over the elements, and His love of those whom He died to save; and, taking this as a kind of text, I knelt down, the others imitating me, and prayed that He who rebuked the sea and the wind before His doubting disciples,

would be with us who believed in Him in our present danger.

Many things I said (feeling that He whom I addressed was our Father, and that He alone could save us) which have gone from my mind, and tears stood in my eyes as I prayed; but I was not ashamed to let the others see them, even if they had not been as greatly affected as I, which was not the case. Nor would I conclude my prayer without entreating God to comfort the heart of the mourner, and to receive in heaven the soul of him for whom she was weeping.

I then shook Cornish and the steward heartily by the hand, and I am sure, by the expression in Cornish's face, that he was glad he had stayed, and that his kneeling in prayer had done him good.

"Now," said I, "you had best get your dinner, and relieve the boatswain; and you, steward, obtain what food you can, and

bring it to us here, and then you and the bo'sun can dine together."

The two men left the cabin, and I went and seated myself beside Miss Robertson, and said all that I could to comfort her.

She was very grateful to me for my prayers for herself and her father, and already, as though she had drawn support from our little service, spoke with some degree of calmness of his death. It would have made her happy, she said, could she have kissed him before he died, and have been awake to attend to any last want.

I told her that I believed he had died in his sleep, without a struggle; for, so recent as his death was, less placidity would have appeared in his face had he died awake or conscious. I added that secretly I had never believed he would live to reach Valparaiso, had the ship continued her voyage. He was too old a man to suffer

and survive the physical and mental trials he had passed through; and sad though his death was under the circumstances which surrounded it, yet she must think that it had only been hastened a little; for he was already an old man, and his end might have been near, even had all prospered and he had reached England in his own ship.

By degrees I drew her mind away from the subject by leading her thoughts to our own critical position. At another time I should have softened my account of our danger: but I thought it best to speak plainly, as the sense of the insecurity of our lives would in some measure distract her thoughts from her father's death.

She asked me if the storm was not abating.

"It is not increasing in violence," I answered, "which is a good sign. But

there is one danger to be feared which must very shortly take me on deck. The wind may suddenly lull and blow again hard from another quarter. This would be the worst thing that could happen to us, for we should then have what is called a cross sea, and the ship is so deeply loaded that we might have great difficulty in keeping her afloat."

"May I go on deck with you?"

"You would not be able to stand. Feel this!" I exclaimed, as the ship's stern rose to a sickening height and then came down, down, down, with the water roaring about her as high as our ears.

"Let me go with you!" she pleaded.

"Very well," I replied, meaning to keep her under the companion, half-way up the ladder.

I took a big top-coat belonging to the captain and buttoned her up in it, and also

tied his fur cap over her head, so that she would be well protected from the wind, whilst the coat would keep her dress close against her.

I then slipped on my oilskins, and taking a strong grip of her hand to steady her, led her up the companion ladder.

"Do not come any further," said I.

"Wherever you go I will go," she answered, grasping my arm.

Admiring her courage and stirred by her words, which were as dear to me as a kiss from her lips would have been, I led her right on to the deck over to windward, and made her sit on a small coil of rope just under the rail.

The sea was no heavier than it had been since the early morning, and yet my short absence below had transformed it into a sublime and stupendous novelty.

You will remember that not only was the

Grosvenor a small ship, but that she lay deep, with a free board lower by a foot and a half than she ought to have shown.

The height from the poop rail to the water was not above twelve feet; and it is therefore no exaggeration to say that the sea, running from fifteen to twenty feet high, stood like walls on either side of her.

To appreciate the effect of such a sea upon a ship like the *Grosvenor*, you must have crossed the Atlantic in a hurricane, not in an immense and powerful ocean steamer, but in a yacht.

But even this experience would not enable you to realise our danger; for the yacht would not be overloaded with cargo, she would probably be strong, supple, and light; whereas the *Grosvenor* was choked to the height of the hold with seven hundred and fifty tons of dead weight, and

was a Nova Scotia soft wood ship, which means that she might start a butt at any moment and go to pieces in one of her frightful swoops downwards.

Having lodged Miss Robertson in a secure and sheltered place, I crawled along the poop on to the main-deck and sounded the well again. I found a trifle over six inches of water in her, which satisfied me that she was still perfectly tight, and that the extra leakage was owing to the drainings from the decks.

I regained the poop and communicated the good news to the boatswain, who nodded; but I noticed that there was more anxiety in his face than I liked to see, and that he watched the ship very closely each time she pitched with extra heaviness.

Miss Robertson was looking up at the masts with alarmed eyes; but I pointed to

them and smiled, and shook my head to let her know that their wrecked appearance need not frighten her. I then took the telescope, and, making it fast over my back, clambered into the mizzen-top, she watching my ascent with her hands tightly clasped.

The ensign still roared some half-dozen feet below the gaff-end; it was a brave bit of bunting to hold on as it did. I planted myself firmly against the rigging, and carefully swept the weather horizon, and finding nothing there, pointed the glass to leeward; but all that part of the sea was likewise a waste of foaming waves, with never a sign of a ship in all the raging seas.

I was greatly disappointed, for though no ship could have helped us in such a sea, yet the sight of one hove to near us—and no ship afloat, sailer or steamer, but must

have hove to in that gale—would have comforted us greatly, as a promise of help at hand, and rescue to come when the wind should have gone down.

CHAPTER V.

All that day the wind continued to blow with frightful force, and the sky to wear its menacing aspect. On looking, however, at the barometer at four o'clock in the afternoon, I observed a distinct rise in the mercury; but I did not dare to feel elated by this promise of an improvement; for, as I have before said, the only thing the mercury foretells is a change of weather, but what kind of change you shall never be sure of until it comes.

What I most dreaded was the veering of the gale to an opposite quarter, whereby, a new sea being set running right athwart,

or in the eye of the already raging sea, our decks would be helplessly swept and the ship grow unmanageable.

A little after eight the wind sensibly decreased, and, to my great delight, the sky cleared in the direction whence the gale was blowing, so that there was a prospect of the sea subsiding before the wind shifted, that is, if it shifted at all.

When Cornish, who had been below resting after a long spell, came on deck and saw the stars shining, and that the gale was moderating, he stared upwards like one spell-bound, and then, running up to me, seized my hand and wrung it in silence.

I heartily returned this mute congratulation, and we both went over and shook hands with the boatswain; and those who can appreciate the dangers of the frightful storm that had been roaring about us all day, and feel with us in the sentiments of

despair and helplessness which the peril we stood in awoke in us, will understand the significance of our passionate silence as we held each other's hand and looked upon the bright stars, which shone like the blessing of God upon our forlorn state.

I was eager to show Mary Robertson those glorious harbingers, and ran below to bring her on deck.

I found her again in the cabin in which her father lay, bending over his body in prayer. I waited until she turned her head, and then exclaimed that the wind was falling, and that all the sky in the north-west was bright with stars, and begged her to follow me and see them.

She came immediately, and, after looking around her, cried out in a rapturous voice—

"Oh, Mr. Royle! God has heard our prayers!" and, in the wildness of her emotions, burst into a flood of tears.

I held her hand as I answered—

"It was your grief that moved me to pray to Him, and I consider you our guardian angel on board this ship, and that God who loves you will spare our lives for your sake."

"No, no; do not say so; I am not worthier than you—not worthier than the brave boatswain and Cornish, whose repentance would do honour to the noblest heart. Oh, if my poor father had but been spared to me!"

She turned her pale face and soft and swimming eyes up to the stars and gazed at them intently, as though she witnessed a vision there.

But though the wind had abated, it still blew a gale, and the sea boiled and tumbled about us and over our decks in a manner that would have been terrifying had we not seen it in a greater state of fury.

I sent the steward forward to see if he could get the galley fire to burn, so as to boil us some water for coffee, for though the ship was in a warm latitude, yet the wind, owing to its strength, was at times piercingly cold, and we all longed for a hot drink—a cup of hot coffee or cocoa being infinitely more invigorating, grateful, and warming than any kind of spirits drunk cold.

All that the steward did, however, was to get wet through; and this he managed so effectually that he came crawling aft, looking precisely as if he had been fished out of the water with grappling-hooks.

I lighted a bull's-eye lamp and went to the pumps and sounded the well.

On hauling up the rod I found to my consternation that there were nine inches of water in the ship.

I was so much startled by this discovery that I stood for some moments motionless;

then, bethinking me that one of the plugged auger holes might be leaking, I slipped forward without saying a word to the others, and, getting a large mallet from the tool-chest, I entered the forecastle, so as to get into the fore peak.

I had not been in the forecastle since the men had left the ship, and I cannot describe the effect produced upon me by this dark deserted abode, with its row of idly swinging hammocks glimmering in the light shed by the bull's-eye lamp; the black chests of the seamen which they had left behind them; here and there a suit of dark oilskins suspended by a nail and looking like a hanged man; the hollow space resonant with the booming thunder of the seas and the mighty wash of water swirling over the top-gallant deck.

The whole scene took a peculiarly ghastly significance from the knowledge that of all

the men who had occupied those hammocks and bunks, one only survived; for four of them we ourselves had killed, and I could not suppose that the long-boat had lived ten minutes after the gale had broken upon her.

I made my way over the cable-ranges, stooping my head to clear the hammocks, and striking my shins against the sea-chests, and swung myself into the hold.

Here I found myself against the water casks, close against the cargo, and just beyond was the bulk-head behind which the boatswain had hidden while Stevens bored the holes.

Carefully throwing the light over the walls, I presently perceived the plugs or ends of the broom-stick protruding; and going close to them I found they were perfectly tight, that no sign of moisture was visible around them.

It may seem strange that this discovery vexed and alarmed me.

And yet this was the case.

It would have made me perfectly easy in my mind to have seen the water gushing in through one of these holes, because not only would a few blows of the mallet have set it to rights, but it would have acquainted me with the cause of the small increase of water in the hold.

Now that cause must be sought elsewhere.

Was it possible that the apprehensions I had felt each time the ship had taken one of her tremendous headers were to be realised?—that she had strained a butt or started a bolt in some ungetatable place?

Here where I stood, deep in the ship, below the water-line, it was frightful to hear her straining, it was frightful to feel her motion.

The whole place resounded with groans and cries, as if the hold had been filled with wounded men.

What bolts, though forged by a Cyclops, could resist that horrible grinding?—could hold together the immense weight which the sea threw up as a child a ball, leaving parts of it poised in air, out of water, unsustained save by the structure that contained it, then letting the whole hull fall with a hollow, horrible crash into a chasm between the waves, beating it first here, then there, with blows the force of which was to be calculated in hundreds of tons?

I scrambled up through the fore scuttle, and perceiving Cornish smoking a pipe under the break of the poop, I desired he would go and relieve the boatswain at the wheel for a short while and send him to me, as I had something particular to say to him.

I waited until the boatswain came, as

here was the best place I could choose to conduct a conversation.

Beyond all question the wind was falling, and though the ship still rolled terribly, she was not taking in nearly so much water over her sides.

I re-trimmed the lamp in my hand, and in a few minutes the boatswain joined me.

I said to him at once—

"I have just made nine inches of water in the hold."

"When was that?" he inquired.

"Ten minutes ago."

"When you sounded the well before what did you find?"

"Between five and six inches."

"I'll tell you what it is, sir," said he. "You'll hexcuse me sayin' of it, but it's no easy job to get at the true depth of water in a ship's bottom when she's tumblin' about like this here."

"I think I got correct soundings."

"Suppose," he continued, "you drop the rod when she's on her beam ends. Where's the water? Why, the water lies all on one side, and the rod 'll come up pretty near dry."

"I waited until the ship was level."

"Ah, *you* did, because you knows your work. But it's astonishin' what few persons there are as really *does* know how to sound the pumps. You'll hexcuse me, sir, but I should like to drop the rod myself."

"Certainly," I replied, "and I hope you'll make it less than I."

In order to render my description clear to readers not acquainted with such details, I may state that in most large ships there is a pipe that leads from the upper deck, alongside the pumps, down to the bottom or within a few inches of the bottom of the vessel. The water in the hold necessarily

rises to the height of its own level in this pipe; and in order to guage the depth of water, a dry rod of iron, usually graduated in feet and inches, is attached to the end of a line and dropped down the tube, and when drawn up the depth of water is ascertained by the height of the water on the rod.

It is not too much to say that no method for determining this essential point in a ship's safety could well be more susceptible of inaccuracy than this.

The immersed rod, on being withdrawn from the tube, wets the sides of the tube; hence, though the rod be dry when it is dropped a second time, it is wetted in its passage down the tube; and as the accuracy of its indication is dependent on its exhibiting the mark of the level of water, it is manifest that if it becomes wetted before reaching the water, the result it shows on being withdrawn must be erroneous.

Secondly, as the boatswain remarked to me, if the well be sounded at any moment when the vessel is inclined at any angle on one side or the other, the water must necessarily roll to the side to which the vessel inclines, by which the height of the water in the well is depressed, so that the rod will not report the true depth.

Hence, to use the sounding-rod properly, one must not only possess good sense, but exercise very great judgment.

I held the lamp close to the sounding-pipe, and the boatswain carefully dried the rod on his coat preparatory to dropping it.

He then let it fall some distance down the tube, keeping it, however, well above the bottom, until the ship, midway in a roll, stood for a moment on a level keel.

He instantly dropped the rod, and hauling it up quickly, remarked that we had got the true soundings this time.

He held the rod to the light, and I found it a fraction over nine inches.

"That's what it is, anyways," said he, putting down the rod.

"An increase of three inches since the afternoon."

"Well, there's nothen to alarm us in that, is there, Mr. Royle?" he exclaimed. "Perhaps its one o' my plugs as wants hammerin'."

"No, they're as tight as a new kettle," I answered. "I have just come from examining them."

"Well, all we've got to do is to pump the ship out; and, if we can, make the pumps suck all right. That 'll show us if anything's wrong."

This was just the proposition I was about to make; so I went into the cuddy and sang out for the steward, but he was so long answering that I lost my temper and

ran into the pantry, where I found him shamming to be asleep.

I started him on to his legs and had him on the main-deck in less time than he could have asked what the matter was.

"Look here!" I cried, "if you don't turn to and help us all to save our lives, I'll just send you adrift in that quarter-boat with the planks out of her bottom! What do you mean by pretending to be asleep when I sing out to you?"

And after abusing him for some time to let him know that I would have no skulking, and that if his life were worth having he must save it himself, for we were not going to do his work and our own as well, I bid him lay hold of one of the pump-handles, and we all three of us set to work to pump the ship.

If this were not the heaviest job we had yet performed, it was the most tiring; but

we plied our arms steadily and perseveringly, taking every now and then a spell of rest, and shifting our posts so as to vary our postures; and after pumping I scarcely know how long, the pumps sucked, whereat the boatswain and I cheered heartily.

"Now, sir," said the boatswain, as we entered the cuddy to refresh ourselves with a drain of brandy and water after our heavy exertions, "we know that the ship's dry, leastways, starting from the ship's bottom; if the well's sounded agin at half-past ten—its now half-past nine—that 'll be time enough to find out if anything's gone wrong."

"How about the watches? We're all adrift again. Here's Cornish at the wheel, and its your watch on deck."

As I said this, Miss Robertson came out of the cabin where her father lay—do what I might I could not induce her to keep

away from the old man's body—and approaching us slowly asked why we had been pumping.

"Why, ma'm," replied the boatswain, "it's always usual to pump the water out o' wessels. On dry ships it's done sometimes in the mornin' watch, and t'others they pumps in the first dog watch. All accordin'. Some wessels as they calls colliers require pumpin' all day long; and the *Heagle*, which was the fust wessel as I went to sea in, warn't the only Geordie as required pumpin' not only all day long but all night long as well. Every wessel has her own custom, but it's a werry dry ship indeed as don't want pumpin' wunce a day."

"I was afraid," she said, "when I heard the clanking of the pumps that water was coming into the ship."

She looked at me earnestly, as though she believed that this was the case and

that I would not frighten her by telling her so. I had learnt to interpret the language of her eyes by this time, and answered her doubts as though she had expressed them.

"I should tell you at once if there was any danger threatened in that way," I said. "There was more water in the ship than I cared to find in her, and so the three of us have been pumping her out."

"About them watches, Mr. Royle?" exclaimed the boatswain.

"Well, begin afresh, if you like," I replied. "I'll take the wheel for two hours, and then you can relieve me."

"Why will you not let me take my turn at the wheel?" said Miss Robertson.

The boatswain laughed.

"I have proved to you that I know how to steer."

"Well, that's right enough," said the boatswain.

"All three of you can lie down, then."

I smiled and shook my head.

Said the boatswain: "If your arms wur as strong as your sperrit, Miss, there'd be no reason why you shouldn't go turn and turn about with us."

"But I can hold the wheel."

"It 'ud fling you overboard. Listen to its kickin'. You might as well try to prewent one o' Barclay Perkins' dray hosses from bustin' into a gallop by catchin' hold o' it's tail. It 'ud be a poor look-out for us to lose you, I can tell yer. What," continued the boatswain, energetically, "we want to know is that you're sleepin', and forgettin' all this here excitement in pleasing dreams. To see a lady like you knocked about by a gale o' wind is just one o' them things I have no fancy for. Mr. Royle, if I had a young and beautiful darter, and a Dook or a Barryonet worth a thousand a

year, if that ain't sayin' too much, wos to propose marriage to her, an' ax her to come and be married to him in some fur-off place, wich 'ud oblige her to cross the water, blowed if I'd consent. No flesh an' blood o' mine as I had any kind o' feeling for should set foot on board ship without fust having a row with me. Make no mistake. I'm talkin' o' females, Miss. I say the sea ain't a fit place for women and gells. It does middlin' well for the likes of me and Mr. Royle here, as aren't afraid o' carryin' full-rigged ships and other agreeable dewices in gunpowder and Hindian ink on our harms, and is seasoned, as the sayin' is, to the wexations o' the mariner's life. But when it comes to young ladies crossin' the ocean, an' I don't care wot they goes as—as passengers or skippers' wives, or stewardishes, or female hemigrants—then I say it ain't proper, and if I'd ha' been a lawyer I'd ha' made it agin

the law, and contrived such a Act of Paleyment as 'ud make the gent as took his wife, darter, haunt, cousin, grandmother, female nephey, or any relations in petticoats to sea along with him, wish hisself hanged afore he paid her passage money."

I was so much impressed by this vehement piece of rhetoric, delivered with many convulsions of the face, and a great deal of hand-sawing, that I could not forbear mixing him some more brandy and water, which he drank at a draught, having first wished Miss Robertson and myself long life and plenty of happiness.

His declamation had quite silenced her, though I saw by her eyes that she would renew her entreaties the moment she had me alone.

"Then you'll go on deck, sir, and relieve Cornish, and I'll turn in?" observed the boatswain.

"Yes."

"Right," said he, and was going.

I added:

"We must sound the well again at half-past ten."

"Aye! aye!"

"I shan't be able to leave the wheel, and I would rather you should sound than Cornish. I'll send the steward to rouse you."

"Very well," said he. And after waiting to hear if I had anything more to say, he entered his cabin, and in all probability was sound asleep two minutes after.

Miss Robertson stood near the table, with her hands folded and her eyes bent down.

I was about to ask her to withdraw to her cabin and get some sleep.

"Mr. Royle, you are dreadfully tired and worn out, and yet you are going on deck to remain at the wheel for two hours."

"That is nothing."

"Why will you not let me take your place?"

"Because—— "

"Let the steward keep near that ladder there, so that I can call to him if I want you."

"Do you think I could rest with the knowledge you were alone on deck?"

"You refuse because you believe I am not to be trusted," she said gently, looking down again.

"If your life were not dependent on the ship's safety, I should not think of her safety, but of yours. I refuse for your own sake, not for mine—no, I will not say that. For *both* our sakes I refuse. I have one dear hope—well, I will call it a great ambition, which I need not be ashamed to own: it is, that I may be the means of placing you on shore in England. This

hope has given me half the courage with which I have fought on through danger after danger since I first brought you from the wreck. If anything should happen to you now, I feel that all the courage and strength of heart which have sustained me would go. Is that saying too much? I do not wish to exaggerate," I exclaimed, feeling the blood in my cheeks, and lamenting, without being able to control, the impulse that had forced this speech from me, and scarcely knowing whether to applaud or detest myself for my candour.

She looked up at me with her frank, beautiful eyes, but on a sudden averted them from my face to the door of the cabin where her dead father lay. A look of indescribable anguish came over her, and she drew a deep, long, sobbing breath.

Without another word, I took her hand and led her to the cabin, and I knew the

reason why she did not turn and speak to me was that I might not see she was weeping.

But it was a time for action, and I dared not let the deep love that had come to me for her divert my thoughts from my present extremity.

I summoned the steward, who tumbled out of his cabin smartly enough, and ordered him to bring his mattress and lay it alongside the companion ladder so as to be within hail.

This done, I gained the poop and sent Cornish below.

CHAPTER VI.

As I stood at the wheel I considered how I should act when the storm had passed. And I was justified in so speculating, because now the sky was clear right away round, and the stars large and bright, though a strong gale was still blowing and keeping the sea very heavy.

Indeed, the clearness of the sky made me think that the wind would go to the eastward, but as yet there was no sign of it veering from the old quarter.

We had been heading west ever since we hove to, and travelling broadside on dead south south-east. Now, if wind and sea dropped, our business would be to make sail

if possible, and, with the wind holding north north-west, make an eight hours' board north-easterly, and then round and stand for Bermuda.

This, of course, would depend upon the weather.

It was, however, more than possible that we should be picked up very soon by some passing ship. It was not as though we were down away in the South Pacific, or knocking about in the poisonous Gulf of Guinea, or up in the North Atlantic at 60°. We were on a great ocean highway, crossed and re-crossed by English, American, Dutch, and French ships, to and from all parts of the world; and bad indeed would our fortune be, and baleful the star under which we sailed, if we were not overhauled in a short time and assistance rendered us.

A great though unexpressed ambition of mine was to save the ship and navigate

her myself, not necessarily to England, but to some port whence I could communicate with her owners and ask for instructions.

As I have elsewhere admitted, I was entirely dependent on my profession, my father having been a retired army surgeon, who had died extremely poor, leaving me at the age of twelve an orphan, with no other friend in the world than the vicar of the parish we dwelt in, who generously sent me to school for two years at his own expense, and then, after sounding my inclinations, apprenticed me to the sea.

Under such circumstances, therefore, it would be highly advantageous to my interests to save the ship, since my doing so would prefer some definite claims upon the attention of the owners, or perhaps excite the notice of another firm more generous in their dealings with their servants, and of a higher commercial standing.

Whilst I stood dreaming in this manner at the wheel, allowing my thoughts to run on until I pictured myself the commander of a fine ship, and ending in allowing my mind to become engrossed with thoughts of Mary Robertson, whom I believed I should never see again after we had bidden each other farewell on shore, and who would soon forget the young second mate, whom destiny had thrown her with for a little time of trouble and suffering and death, I beheld a figure advance along the poop, and on its approach I perceived the boatswain.

"I've been sounding the well, Mr. Royle," said he. "I roused up on a sudden and went and did it, as I woke up anxious; and there's bad news, sir, twelve inches o' water."

"Twelve inches!" I cried.

"It's true enough. I found the bull's-

eye on the cuddy table, and the rod don't tell no lies when it's properly used."

"The pumps suck at four inches, don't they?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that's a rise of eight inches since half-past nine o'clock. What time is it now?"

"Twenty minutes arter ten."

"We must man the pumps at once. Call Cornish. You'll find the steward on a mattress against the companion ladder."

He paused a moment to look round him at the weather, and then went away.

I could not doubt now that the ship was leaky, and after what we had endured, and my fond expectation of saving the vessel—and the miserable death, after all our hopes, that might be in store for us—I felt that it was very very hard on us, and I yielded to a fit of despair.

What struck most home to me was that my passionate dream to save Mary Robertson might be defeated. The miseries which had been accumulated on her wrung my heart to think of. First her shipwreck, and then the peril of the mutiny, and then the dreadful storm that had held us face to face with death throughout the fearful day, and then the death of her father, and now this new horror of the ship whereon we stood filling with water beneath our feet.

Yet hope—and God be praised for this mercy to all men—springs eternal, and after a few minutes my despair was mastered by reflection. If the ship made no more water than eight inches in three-quarters of an hour, it would be possible to keep her afloat for some days by regular spells at the pump, and there were four hands to work them if Miss Robertson steered whilst we pumped.

In that time it would be a thousand to one if our signal of distress was not seen and answered.

Presently I heard the men pumping on the main-deck, and the boatswain's voice singing to encourage the others. What courage that man had! I, who tell this story, am ashamed to think of the prominence I give to my own small actions when all the heroism belongs to him. I know not what great writer it was who, visiting the field of the battle of Waterloo, asked how it was that the officers who fell in that fight had graves and monuments erected to them, when the soldiers—the privates by whom all the hard work was done, who showed all the courage and won the battle—lay nameless in hidden pits? And so when we send ships to discover the North Pole we have little to say about poor Jack, who loses his life by scurvy, or his toes and nose by frost-

bites, who labours manfully, and who makes all the success of the expedition so far as it goes. Our shouts are for Jack's officer; we title him, we lionize him—*his* was all the work, all the suffering, all the anxiety, we think. I, who have been to sea, say that Jack deserves as much praise as his skipper, and perhaps a little more; and if honour is to be bestowed, let Jack have his share; and if a monument is to be raised, let poor Jack's name be written on the stone as well as the other's; for be sure that Jack could have done without the other, but also be sure that the other couldn't have done without Jack.

Chained to my post, which I dared not vacate for a moment, for the ship pitched heavily, and required close watching as she came to and fell off upon the swinging seas, I grew miserably anxious to learn how the pumping progressed, and felt that, after the

boatswain, my own hands would do four times the work of the other two.

It was our peculiar misfortune that of the four men on board the ship three only should be capable; and that as one of the three men was constantly required at the wheel, there were but two available men to do the work. Had the steward been a sailor our difficulties would have been considerably diminished, and I bitterly deplored my want of judgment in allowing Fish and the Dutchman to be destroyed; for though I would not have trusted Johnson and Stevens, yet the other two might have been brought over to work for us, and I had no doubt that the spectacle of the perishing wretches in the long-boat, as she was whirled past us, would have produced as salutary an effect upon them as it had upon Cornish; and with two extra hands of this kind we could not only have kept the pumps going, but

have made shift to sail the ship at the same time.

The hollow thrashing sounds of the pump either found Miss Robertson awake or aroused her, for soon after the pumping had commenced she came on deck, swathed in the big warm overcoat and fur cap.

Such a costume for a girl must make you laugh in the description; and yet, believe me, she lost in nothing by it. The coat dwarfed her figure somewhat, but the fur cap looked luxurious against her fair hair, and nothing could detract from the exquisite femininity of her face, manner, and carriage. I speak of the impression she had made on me in the daytime; the starlight only revealed her white face now to me.

"Is the water still coming into the ship?" she asked.

"The bo'sun has reported to me that

eight inches deep have come into her since half-past nine."

"Is that much?"

"More than we want."

"I don't like to trouble you with my questions, Mr. Royle; but I am very, very anxious."

"Of course you are; and do not suppose that you can trouble. Ask me what you will. I promise to tell you the truth."

"If you find that you cannot pump the water out as fast as it comes in, what will you do?"

"Leave the ship."

"How?" she exclaimed, looking around her.

"By that quarter-boat there."

"But it would fill with water and sink in such waves as these."

"These waves are not going to last, and

it is quite likely that by this time to-morrow the sea will be calm."

"Will the ship keep afloat until to-morrow?"

"If the water does not come in more rapidly than it does at present, the ship will keep afloat so long as we can manage to pump her out every hour. And so," said I, laughing to encourage her, "we are not going to die all at once, you see."

She drew quite close to me and said—

"I shall never fear death while you remain on board, Mr. Royle. You have saved me from death once, and, though I may be wicked in daring to prophesy, yet I feel *certain—certain*," she repeated, with singular emphasis, "that you will save my life again."

"I shall try very hard, be sure of that," I answered.

"I believe—no, it is not so much a belief

as a strong conviction, with which my mind seems to have nothing to do, that, whatever dangers may be before us, you and I will not perish."

She paused, and I saw that she was looking at me earnestly.

"You will not think me superstitious if I tell you that the reason of my conviction is a dream? My poor father came and stood beside me: he was so *real!* I stretched out my arms to him, and he took my hand and said, '*Darling, do not fear! He who has saved your life once will save it again. God will have mercy upon you and him for the prayers you offered to Him.*' He stooped and kissed me and faded away, and I started up and heard the men pumping. I went to look at him, for I thought . . . . I thought he had really come to my side. . . . Oh, Mr. Royle, his spirit is with us!"

Though my mind was of too prosaic a

turn to catch at any significance in a dream, yet there was a strange, deep, solemn tenderness in her voice and manner as she related this vision, that impressed me. It made my heart leap to hear her own sweet lips pronounce her faith in me, and my natural hopes and longings for life gathered a new light and enthusiasm from her own belief in our future salvation.

"Shipwrecked persons have been saved by a dream before now," I replied, gravely. "Many years ago a vessel called the *Mary* went ashore on some rocks to the southward of one of the Channel Islands. A few of the crew managed to gain the rocks, where they existed ten or twelve days without water or any kind of food save limpets, which only increased their thirst without relieving their hunger. A vessel bound out of Guernsey passed the rocks at a distance too far away to observe the signals of dis-

tress made by the perishing men. But the son of the captain had twice dreamed that there were persons dying on those rocks, and so importuned his father to stand close to them that the man with great reluctance consented. In this way, and by a dream, those sailors were saved. Though I do not, as a rule, believe in dreams, I believe this story to be true, and I believe in your dream."

She remained silent, but the ship presently giving a sudden lurch, she put her hand on my arm to steady herself, and kept it there. Had I dared I should have bent my head and kissed the little hand. She could not know how much she made me love her by such actions as this.

"The boatswain has told me," she said, after a short silence, "that you want to save the ship. I asked him why? Are you angry with me for being curious?"

"Not in the least. What did he answer?"

"He said that you thought the owners would recompense you for your fidelity, and promote you in their service."

"Now how could he know this? I have never spoken such thoughts to him."

"It would not be difficult to guess such a wish."

"Well, I don't know that I have any right to expect promotion or recompense of any kind from owners who send their ship to sea so badly provisioned that the men mutiny."

"But if the water gains upon the ship you will not be able to save her?"

"No, she must sink."

"What will you do then?"

"Put you on shore or on board another ship," I replied, laughing at my own evasion, for I knew what she meant.

"Oh, of course, if we do not reach the shore we shall none of us be able to do anything," she said, dropping her head, for she stood close enough to the binnacle light to enable me to see her movements and almost catch the expression on her face. "I mean what will you do when we get ashore?"

"I must try to get another ship."

"To command?"

"Oh dear no! as second mate, if they'll have me."

"If command of a ship were given you would you accept it?"

"If I could, but I can't."

She asked quickly, "Why not?"

"Because I have not passed an examination as master."

She was silent again, and I caught myself listening eagerly to the sound of the pumping going on on the main-deck and wonder-

ing at my own levity in the face of our danger. But I could not help forgetting a very great deal when she was at my side.

All at once it flashed upon me that her father owned several ships, and that her questions were preliminary to her offering me the command of one of them.

I give you my honour that all recollection of who and what she was, of her station on shore, of her wealth as the old man's heiress, had as absolutely gone out of my mind as if the knowledge had never been imparted. What she was to me—what love and the wonderful association of danger and death had endeared her to me as—was what she was as she stood by my side, a sweet and gentle woman whom my heart was drawing closer and closer to every hour, whose life I would have died to preserve, whose danger made my own life a larger necessity to me than I should have felt it.

A momentary emotion of disappointment, a resentment whereof I knew not the meaning, through lacking the leisure or the skill to analyze it, made me turn and say—

"Would you like me to command one of your ships, Miss Robertson?"

"Yes," she answered, promptly.

"As a recompense for my humane efforts to preserve you from drowning?"

She withdrew her hand from my arm and inclined her head to look me full in the face.

"Mr. Royle, I never thought you would speak to me like that."

"I want no recompense for what I have done, Miss Robertson."

"I have not offered you any recompense."

"Let me feel," I said, "that you understand it is possible for an English sailor to do his duty without asking or expecting any manner of reward. The Humane Society's medals are not for him."

"Why are you angry with me?" she exclaimed, sinking her head, and speaking with a little sob in her voice.

I was stirred to the heart by her broken tones, and answered—

"I am not angry. I could not be angry with you. I wish you to feel that what I have done, that whatever I may do is . . is . . . ."

I faltered and stopped—an ignominious break down! though I think it concealed the true secret of my resentment.

I covered my confusion by taking her hand, and resting it on my arm again.

"Do you mean," she said, "that all you have done has been for my sake only—out of humanity—that you would do as much for anybody else?"

"No," said I, boldly.

Again she withdrew her hand and remained silent, and I made up my mind not to interrupt her thoughts.

After a few moments she went to the ship's side, and stood there ; sometimes looking at the stars, and sometimes at the water that stretched away into the gloom in heavy breaking seas.

The wind was singing shrilly up aloft, but the sounds of the pumping ceased on a sudden.

I awaited the approach of the boatswain with inexpressible anxiety. After an interval I saw his figure come up the poop ladder.

"Pumps suck!" he roared out.

"Hurrah!" I shouted. "Down with you for grog all round," for the other two were following the boatswain. But they all came aft first and stood near the wheel, blowing like whales, and Miss Robertson joined the group.

"If it's no worse than this, bo'sun," I exclaimed, "she'll do."

"Aye, she'll do, sir; but it's hard work. My arms feel as though they wos tied up in knots."

"So do mine," said the steward.

"Shall I take the wheel?" asked Cornish.

"No; go and get some grog and turn in, all of you. I am as fresh as a lark, and will stay here till twelve o'clock," I replied.

The steward at once shuffled below.

"Boatswain, ask Mr. Royle to let me take the wheel," said Miss Robertson. "He has been talking to me for the last half-hour and sometimes held the wheel with one hand. I am sure I can hold it."

"As you won't go below, Miss Robertson, you shall steer; but I will stop by you," I said.

"That will be of no use!" she exclaimed.

Cornish smothered a laugh and walked away.

"Now, bo'sun, down with you," I cried.

"I'll have you up again shortly to sound the well. But half an hour's sleep is something. If you get knocked up, I lose half the ship's company—two-thirds of it."

"All right, sir," he replied, with a prodigious yawn. "You an' the lady 'll know how to settle this here business of steering."

And off he went.

"You see how obedient these men are, Miss Robertson. Why will you not obey orders, and get some sleep?"

"I have offended you, Mr. Royle, and I am very, very sorry."

"Let us make peace then," I said, holding out my hand.

She took it; but when I had got her hand, I would not let it go for some moments.

She was leaving the deck in silence when she came back and said—

"If we should have to leave this ship

suddenly, I should not like—it would make me unhappy for ever to think of poor papa left in her.

She spoke, poor girl, with a great effort.

I answered immediately—

"Any wish you may express shall be carried out."

"He would go down in this ship without a prayer said for him," she exclaimed, sobbing.

"Will you leave this with me? I promise you that no tenderness, no reverence, no sincere sorrow shall be wanting."

"Mr. Royle, you are a dear good friend to me. God knows how lonely I should have been without you—and yet—I made you angry."

"Do not say that. What I do I do for your safety—for your ultimate happiness—so that when we say farewell to each other on shore, I may feel that the trust which

God gave me in you was honourably and faithfully discharged. I desire, if our lives are spared, that this memory may follow me when all this scene is changed, and we behold it again only in our dreams. I should have told you my meaning just now, but one cannot always express one's thoughts."

"You have told me your meaning, and I shall not forget it. God bless you!" she exclaimed, in her calm, earnest voice, and went slowly down into the cuddy.

CHAPTER VII.

THE wind still continued a brisk gale and the sea very heavy. Yet overhead it was a glorious night, and as the glass had risen steadily, I was surprised to find the wild weather holding on so long.

I busied my head with all kinds of schemes to save the ship, and believed it would be no hard matter to do so if the water did not come into her more quickly than she was now making it.

Unfortunately, there were only two parts of the ship's hold which we could get into: namely, right forward in the fore peak, and right aft down in the lazarette. If she had

strained a butt, or started any part of her planking or outer skin, amidships or anywhere in her bottom between these two points, there would be no chance of getting at the leak unless the cargo were slung out of her.

But the leak could not be considered very serious that did not run a greater depth of water into the ship than under a foot an hour; and with the Bermudas close at hand and the weather promising fair, I could still dare to think it possible, despite the hopes and fears which alternately depressed and elevated me, to bring the vessel to port, all crippled and under-manned as she was.

These speculations kept me busily thinking until half-past eleven, on which I bawled to the steward, who got up and called the boatswain and Cornish, though I only wanted the boatswain. Cornish

thought it was midnight and his turn to take the wheel, so he came aft. I resigned my post, being anxious to get on the main-deck, where I found the bo'sun in the act of sounding the well, he having lost some time in re-lighting the lamp, which had burnt out.

He dropped the rod carefully and found the water thirteen inches deep,—that was, nine inches high in the pumps.

"Just what I thought," said he; "she's takin' of it at a foot an hour, no better and no worse."

"Well, we must turn to," I exclaimed. "We mustn't let it rise above a foot, as every inch will make our work longer and harder."

"If it stops at that, good and well," said the boatswain. "But there's always a hif in these here sinkin' cases. However, there's time enough to croak when the worst happens."

He called to the steward, and we all three went to work and pumped vigorously, and kept the handles grinding and clanking, with now and again a spell of a couple of minutes' rest between, until the pumps gave out the throaty sound which told us that the water was exhausted.

Though this proved beyond a doubt that, providing the leak remained as it was, we should be able to keep the water under, the prospect before us of having to work the pumps every hour was extremely disheartening; all four of us required sleep to put us right, and already our bones were aching with weariness. Yet it was certain that we should be able to obtain at the very best but brief snatches of rest; and I for one did not even promise myself so much, for I had strong misgivings as to the condition of the ship's bottom, and was prepared, at any moment, to find the water gaining more

rapidly upon us than we could pump it out, though I kept my fears to myself.

I had been on deck now for four hours at one stretch; so, leaving Cornish at the wheel, I lay down on the steward's mattress in the cuddy, whilst he seated himself on the bench with his head upon the cuddy table, and snored in that posture.

But we were all aroused again within the hour by Cornish, who called to us down the companion, and away we floundered, with our eyes gummed up with sleep, to the pumps, and wearily worked them like miserable automatons.

The dawn found me again at the wheel, having been there half an hour.

I scanned the broken desolate horizon in the pale light creeping over it, but no ship was in sight. The sea, though not nearly so dangerous as it had been, was terribly sloppy, short, and quick, and tumbled very

often over the ship's sides, making the decks, with the raffle that encumbered them, look wretched.

I had not had my clothes off me for some days, and the sense of personal discomfort in no small degree aggravated the profound feeling of weariness which ached like rheumatism in my body and absolutely stung in my legs. The skin of my face was hard and dry with long exposure to the terrible wind and the salt water it had blown and dried upon it; and though my underclothing was dry, yet it produced all the sensation of dampness upon my skin, and never in all my life had I felt so uncomfortable, weary, and spiritless as I did standing at the wheel when the dawn broke and I looked abroad upon the rugged fields of water, and found no vessel in sight to inspire me with a moment's emotion of hope.

I was replaced at the wheel by the boatswain, and took another turn at the pumps. When this harassing job was ended, I went into the forecastle, making my way thither with much difficulty.

I had a sacred duty to perform, and now that the daylight was come it was proper I should go to work.

On entering the forecastle I looked around me on the empty hammocks swinging from the deck, and finding one that looked new and clean, took it down and threw the mattress and blankets out of it and folded it up as a piece of canvas.

I then searched the carpenter's berth for a sail needle, twine, and palm, which things, together with the hammock, I took aft.

On reaching the cuddy I called Cornish, whose services in this matter I preferred to the steward's, and bid him follow me into the cabin where the old man's body lay.

When there, I closed the door and informed him that we should bury the poor old gentleman when the morning was more advanced, and that I wished him to help me to sew up the body in the hammock.

God knows I had rather that any man should have undertaken this job than I; but it was a duty I was bound to perform, and I desired, for Miss Robertson's sake, that it should be carried out with all the reverence and tenderness that so rude and simple a burial was susceptible of, and nothing done to cause the least violence to her feelings.

We spread the hammock open on the deck, and lifted the body and placed it on the hammock, and rolled a blanket over it. A very great change had come over the face of the corpse since death, and I do not think I should have known it as the kindly, dignified countenance, reverent with

its white hair and beard, that had smiled at me from the bunk and thanked me for what I had done.

For what I had done!—alas! how mocking was this memory now!—with what painful cynicism did that lonely face illustrate the power of man over the great issues of life and death!

I brought the sides of the hammock to meet over the corpse and held them while Cornish passed the stitches. I then sent him to find me a big holystone or any pieces of iron, so as to sink the body, and he brought some pieces of the stone, which I secured in the clues at the foot of the hammock.

We left the face exposed and raised the body on to the bunk and covered it over; after which I despatched Cornish for a carpenter's short-stage I had noticed forward, and which was in use for slinging the men

over the ship's side for scraping or painting her. A grating would have answered our purpose better, but the hatches were battened down, the tarpaulins over them, and there was no grating to be got at without leaving the hatchway exposed.

I dressed this short-stage in the big ensign, and placed it on the upper bunk ready to be used, and then told Cornish to stand by with the steward, and went aft and knocked at Miss Robertson's door.

My heart was in my throat, for this mission was even more ungrateful to me than the sewing up of the body had been, and I was afraid that I should not be able to address her tenderly enough, and show her how truly I mourned for and with her.

As I got no answer, I was leaving, wishing her to obtain all the sleep she could, but

when I had gone a few paces she came out and followed me.

"Did you knock just now, Mr. Royle?" she asked.

I told her yes, but could not immediately summon up courage enough to tell her why I had knocked.

She looked at me inquiringly, and I began to reproach myself for my weakness, and still I could not address her; but seeing me glance towards her father's cabin she understood all on a sudden, and covered her face with her hands.

"I have left his face uncovered for you to kiss," I said, gently laying my hand on her arm.

She went at once into his cabin, and I closed the door upon her and waited outside.

She did not keep me long waiting. I think, brave girl that she was, even amid

all her desolating sorrow, that she knew I would wish the burial over so that we might address ourselves again to the ship.

"I leave him to you now," she said.

I thought she meant that she would not witness the funeral, and was glad that she had so resolved, and I accordingly took her hand to lead her away to her cabin.

"Let me be with you!" she exclaimed. "Indeed, indeed, I am strong enough to bear it. I should not be happy if I did not know the moment when he left me, that I might pray to God for him then."

"Be it so," I answered. "I will call you when we are ready."

She left me; and Cornish and the steward and I went into the cabin to complete the mournful preparations.

I cased the body completely in the hammock, and we then raised it up and laid it upon the stage, which we had made to

answer for a stretcher, and over it I threw a sheet, so that only the sheet and the ensign were visible.

This done, I consulted with Cornish as to what part of the deck we should choose in order to tilt the body overboard. It is generally the custom to rest the body near the gangway, but the ship was rolling too heavily to enable us to do this now, and the main-deck was afloat, so we decided on carrying the body right aft, and thither we transported it, lodging the foot of the stretcher on the rail abaft the port quarter-boat.

The boatswain removed his hat when he saw the body, and the others imitated him.

I went below and told Miss Robertson that all was ready, and took from among the books belonging to the captain an old thin volume containing the Office for the Burial of Dead at Sea, printed in very large

type. It was fortunate that I had noticed this slip of a book when overhauling Captain Coxon's effects, for my own Prayer-Book did not contain the office, and there was no Church Service among the captain's books.

I entreated Miss Robertson to reflect before resolving to witness the burial. I told her that her presence could do no good, and faithfully assured her that prayers would be read, and the sad little service conducted as reverently and tenderly as my deep sympathy and the respect which the others felt for her could dictate.

She only answered that it would comfort her to pray for him and herself at the moment he was leaving her, and put her hand into mine, and gently and with tearless eyes, though with a world of sorrow in her beautiful pale face, asked me to take her on deck.

Such grief was not to be argued with—indeed, I felt it would be cruel to oppose any fancy, however strange it seemed to me, which might really solace her.

She started and stopped when she saw the stretcher and the white sheet and the outline beneath it, and her hand clasped mine tightly; but she recovered herself and we advanced, and then resolving that she should not see the body leave the stretcher, I procured a flag and placed it near the after skylight and said she could kneel there; which she did with her back turned upon us.

I then whispered Cornish to watch me and take note of the sign I should give him to tilt the stretcher and to do it quickly; after which I placed myself near the body and began to read the service.

It was altogether a strange, impressive scene, one that in a picture would, I

am sure, hold the eye for a long time; but in the reality create an ineffaceable memory.

The insecurity—the peril, I should prefer to say—of our situation, heightened my own feelings, and made me behold in the corpse we were about to commit to the deep a sad type and melancholy forerunner of our own end. The ship, with her broken masts, her streaming decks, her jib-boom gone, her one sail swollen by the hoarse gale, plunging and rolling amid the tumultuous seas that foamed around and over her; the strong man at the wheel, bareheaded, his hair blown about by the wind, looking downwards with a face full of blunt and honest sorrow, and his lips moving as they repeated the words I read; the motionless, kneeling girl; the three of us standing near the corpse; the still, dead burden on the stretcher, waiting to be launched; the blue

sky, and sun kindling into glory as it soared above the eastern horizon: all these were details which formed a picture the wildness and strangeness of which no pen could describe. They are all, as a vision, before me as I write; but they make me know how poor are words, and eloquence how weak, when great realities and things which have befallen many men are to be described.

When I came to that part of the office wherein it is directed that the body shall be let fall into the sea, my heart beat anxiously, for I feared that the girl would look around and see what was done.

I gave the sign, and instantly Cornish obeyed, and I thank God that the sullen splash of the corpse was lost in the roar of a sea bursting under the ship's counter.

Now that it was gone, the worst was over; and in a short time I brought the

service to an end, omitting many portions which assuredly I had not skipped had not time been precious to us.

I motioned to Cornish and the steward to carry the stretcher away, and waited for Miss Robertson to rise; but she remained for some minutes on her knees, and when she rose, the deck was clear.

She gave me her hand, and smiled softly, though with a heart-broken expression in her eyes, at the boatswain by way of thanking him for his sympathy, and I then conducted her below and left her at the door of the cabin, saying—

"I have no words to tell you how I feel for you. Pray God that those who are still living may be spared, and be sure that in His own good time He will comfort you."

CHAPTER VIII.

All that morning the gale continued fresh and the sea dangerous. We found that the ship was regularly making nine to ten inches of water an hour; and after the funeral we turned to and pumped her out again.

But this heavy work, coupled with our extreme anxiety and the perils and labour we had gone through, was beginning to tell heavily upon us. The steward showed signs of what strength he had coming to an end, and Cornish's face had a worn and wasted look as of a man who has fasted long. The boatswain supported this fatigue

best, and always went cheerfully to work, and had encouraging words for us all. As for me, what I suffered most from was, strange to say, the eternal rolling of the ship. At times it completely nauseated me. Also it gave me a racking headache, and occasionally the motion so bewildered me that I was obliged to sit down and hold my head in my hands until the dizziness had passed.

I believe this feeling was the result of over-work, long wakefulness, and preying anxiety, which was hourly sapping my constitution. Yet I was generally relieved by even a quarter of an hour's sleep, but presently was troubled again, and I grew to dread the time when I should take the wheel, for right aft the motion of the ship was intensely felt by me, so much so that on that morning, the vessel's stern falling heavily into a hollow, I nearly fainted,

and only saved myself from rolling on the deck by clinging convulsively to the wheel.

At a quarter-past eleven I had just gone into the cuddy, after having had an hour's spell at the pumps with the boatswain and the steward, when I heard Cornish's voice shouting down the companion, "A sail! a sail!"

But a minute before I had felt so utterly prostrated, that I should not have believed myself capable of taking half-a-dozen steps without a long rest between each. Yet these magical words sent me rushing up the companion ladder with as much speed and energy as I should have been capable of after a long night's refreshing slumber.

The moment Cornish saw me he pointed like a mad man to the horizon on the weather beam, and the ship's stern rising at that moment, I clearly beheld the sails

of a vessel, though in what direction she was going I could not tell by the naked eye.

Both the boatswain and the other had come running aft on hearing Cornish's exclamation, and the steward, in the madness of his eagerness, had swung himself on to the mizzen rigging, and stood there bawling, "Yonder's the ship! yonder's the ship! Come up here, and you'll see her plain enough!"

I got the telescope and pointed it at the vessel, and found that she was heading directly for us, steering due south, with the gale upon her starboard quarter.

On this I cried out: "She's coming slap at us, boys! Hurrah! Cornish, you were the first to see her; thank you! thank you!"

And I grasped his hand and shook it wildly. I then seized the telescope, and

inspected the vessel again, and exclaimed, while I held the glass to my eye—

"She's a big ship, bo'sun. She's carrying a main top-gallant sail, and there's a single reef in her fore-topsail. She can't miss us! She's coming right at us, hand over fist, boys! Steward, go and tell Miss Robertson to come on deck. Down with you and belay that squalling. Do you think we're blind?"

The small ensign was still alive, roaring away just as we had hoisted and left it; but in my excitement I did not think the signal importunate enough, though surely it was so; and rushing to the flag-locker, I got out the book of signals, and sang out to the boatswain to help me to bend on the flags which I threw out, and which would represent that we were sinking.

We hauled the ensign down, and ran up the string of flags, and glorious they looked

in our eyes, as they streamed out in a semi-circle, showing their brilliant colours against the clear blue sky.

Again I took the telescope, and set it on the rail, and knelt to steady myself.

The hull of the ship was now half risen, and as she came rolling and plunging over the seas I could discern the vast space of froth she was throwing up at her bows. Dead on as she was, we could not tell whether she had hoisted any flag at the peak, and I hoped in mercy to us that she would send up an answering pennant to the royal mast-head, so that we might see it and know that our signal was perceived.

But this was a foolish hope, only such a one as bitter eager anxiety could coin. She was coming right at us; she *could* not fail to see us; what need to answer us yet when a little patience, only a little patience, and she would be within a biscuit's throw of us?

Miss Robertson came on deck without any covering on her head, and the wind blew her hair away from its fastenings and floated it out like a cloud of gold. She held on to the rail and stared at the coming ship with wild eyes and a frowning forehead, while the steward, who had fallen crazy with the sight of the ship, clambered once more into the mizzen rigging, and shouted and beckoned to the vessel as a little child would.

It did not take me long, however, to recover my own reason, the more especially as I felt that we might require all the sense we had when the ship rounded and hove to. I could not, indeed, hope that they would send a boat through such a sea; they would lie by us and send a boat when the sea moderated, which, to judge by the barometer and the high and beaming sky, we might expect to find that night or next morning;

and then we should require our senses, not only to keep the pumps going, but to enter the boat calmly and in an orderly way, and help our rescuers to save our lives.

The boatswain leaned against the companion hatchway with his arms folded, contemplating the approaching ship with a wooden face. Variously and powerfully as the spectacle of the vessel had affected Cornish and Miss Robertson, and myself and the steward, on the boatswain it had scarcely produced any impression.

I know not what kind of misgiving came into my mind as I looked from the coming ship to his stolid face.

I had infinite confidence in this man's judgment and bravery, and his lifelessness on this occasion weighed down upon me like a heavy presentiment, insomuch that the cheery gratulatory words I was about

to address to Miss Robertson died away on my lips.

I should say that we had sighted this vessel's upper sails when she was about seventeen miles distant, and, therefore, coming down upon us before a strong wind, and helped onwards by the long running seas, in less than half an hour her whole figure was plain to us upon the water.

I examined her carefully through the glass, striving to make out her nationality by the cut of her aloft. I thought she had the look of a Scotch ship, her hull being after the pattern of the Aberdeen clippers, such as I remembered them in the Australian trade, painted green, and she was also rigged with skysail-poles and a great breadth of canvas.

I handed the glass to the boatswain, and asked him what country he took her to be of. After inspecting her, he said he did not

think she was English; the colour of her canvas looked foreign, but it was hard to tell; we should see her colours presently.

As she approached, Miss Robertson's excitement grew very great; not demonstrative—I mean she did not cry out nor gesticulate like the steward in the rigging; it was visible, like a kind of madness, in her eyes, in her swelling bosom, in a strange, wonderful, brilliant smile upon her face, such as a great actress might wear in a play, but which we who observe it know to be forced and unreal.

I ran below for the fur cap and coat, and made her put them on, and then drew her away from the ship's side and kept close to her, even holding her by the hand for some time, for I could not tell what effect the sight of the ship might produce upon her mind, already strung and weakened by privation and cruel sorrow and peril.

The vessel came rolling and plunging down towards us before the wind, carrying a sea on either quarter as high as her main-brace bumpkins, and spreading a great surface of foam before and around her.

When she was about a couple of miles off they let go the main top-gallant halliards and clewed up the sail; and then the helm was starboarded, which brought her bows astern of us and gave her a sheer, by which we saw that she was a fine barque, of at least eight hundred tons burden.

At the same moment she hoisted Russian colours.

I was bitterly disappointed when I saw that flag. I should have been equally disappointed by the sight of any other foreign flag, unless it were the Stripes and Stars, which floats over brave hearts and is a signal to Englishmen as full of welcome

and promise almost as their own loved bit of bunting.

I had hoped, God knows how earnestly, that we should behold the English ensign at the gaff end. Our chances of rescue by a British ship were fifty to one as against our chances of rescue by a foreigner. Cases, indeed, have been known of ships commanded by Englishmen sighting vessels in distress and leaving them to their fate; but, to the honour and glory of our calling, I say that these cases make so brief a list that no impartial-minded man will allow them to weigh with him a moment when he considers the vast number of instances of pluck, humanity, and heroism which illustrate and adorn the story of British naval life.

It is otherwise with foreigners. I write not with any foolish insular prejudice against wooden shoes and continental con-

nexions: we cannot dispute good evidence. Though I believe that the Russians make fair sailors, and fight bravely on sea, why was it that my heart sank when I saw that flag? I say that the British flag is an assurance to all distressed persons that what can be done for them will be done for them, and foreigners know this well, and would sooner sight it when they are in peril than their own colours, be those colours Dutch, or French, or Spanish, or Danish, or Italian, or Russian. But he must be a confident man indeed who hopes anything from a vessel sailing under a foreign flag when life is to be saved at the risk of the lives of the rescuers.

"He's goin' to round to!" exclaimed the boatswain, who watched the movements of ship with an unconcern absolutely phenomenal to me even to recall now, when I consider that the lives of us all might have

depended upon the issue of the stranger's actions.

She went gracefully swooping and swashing along the water, and I saw the hands upon the deck aft standing by at the main-braces to back the yards.

"Bo'sun!" I cried, "she means to heave to—she won't leave us!"

He made no answer, but continued watching her with an immovable face.

She passed under our stern not more than a quarter of a mile distant, perhaps not so far. There was a crowd of persons near the wheel, some looking at us through binocular glasses, others through telescopes. There were a few women and children among them.

Yet I could detect no hurry, no eagerness, no excitement in their movements; they appeared as imperturbable as Turks or Hollanders, contemplating us as though we

were rather an object of curiosity than in miserable, perishing distress.

I jumped upon the grating abaft the wheel and waved my hat to them and pointed to our signals. A man standing near their starboard quarter-boat, whom, by the way he looked aloft, I judged to be the captain, flourished his hand in reply.

I then, at the top of my voice and through my hands, shouted, "We're sinking! for God's sake stand by us!" On which the same person held up his hand again, though I do not believe he understood or even heard what I said.

Meanwhile they had braced up the foreyards, and as the vessel came round parallel with us, at a distance of about two-thirds of a mile, they backed the mainyards, and in a few moments she lay steady, riding finely upon the water and keeping her decks

dry, though the seas were still splashing over us freely.

Seeing now, as I believed, that she meant to stand by us, all my excitement broke out afresh. I cried out that we were saved, and fell upon my knees and thanked God for His mercy. Miss Robertson sobbed aloud, and the steward came down out of the rigging, and danced about the deck, exclaiming wildly and extending his arms towards the ship. Cornish retained his grasp of the wheel, but could not remove his eyes from the ship; the boatswain alone remained perfectly tranquil, and even angered me by his hard, unconcerned face.

"Good God!" I cried; "do you not value your life? Have you nothing to say? See, she is lying there, and will wait till the sea moderates, and then fetch us on board!"

"Perhaps she may," he answered, "and

it'll be time enough for me to go mad when I *am* saved."

And he then folded his arms afresh, and leaned against the rail, contemplating the ship with the same extraordinary indifference.

They now hauled down the flag, and I waited anxiously to see if they would hoist the answering pennant to let us know they understood our signal; but they made no further sign that way, nor could I be sure, therefore, that they understood the flags we had hoisted; for though in those days Marryatt's Code was in use among ships of all nations, yet it often happened (as it does now), that vessels, both British and foreign, would, through the meanness of their owners, be sent to sea with merely the flags indicating their own number on board, so that speaking one of these vessels was like addressing a dumb person.

The movements of the people on the Russian barque were quite discernible by the naked eye; and we all now, saving the boatswain, watched her with rapt eagerness, the steward stopping his mad antics to grasp the poop rail, and gaze with devouring eyes.

We did not know what they would do, and, indeed, we scarcely knew what we had to expect; for it was plain to us all that a boat would stand but a poor chance in that violent sea, and that we should run a greater risk of losing our lives by quitting the ship than by staying in her.

But would they not give us some sign, some assurance that they meant to stand by us?

The agony of my doubts of their intentions was exquisite.

For some time she held her ground right abreast of us; but our topsail being full,

while the Russian was actually hove to, we slowly began to reach ahead of her.

Seeing this, I cried out to Cornish to put the helm hard down, and keep the sail flat at the leech; but he had already anticipated this order, though it was a useless one; for the ship came to and fell off with every sea, though the helm was hard down, and before we could have got her to behave as we wished, we should have been obliged to clap some after sail upon her, which I did not dare do, as we had only choice of the mizzen and crossjack, and either of these sails (both being large), would probably have slewed her round head into the sea, and thrown her dead and useless on our hands.

Seeing that we were slowly bringing the Russian on to our lee quarter, I called out in the hope of encouraging the others—

"No matter! she will let us draw ahead, and then shorten sail and stand after us."

"Are they goin' to lower that boat?" exclaimed the boatswain, suddenly starting out of his apathetic manner.

There was a crowd of men round the starboard davits where the quarter-boat hung, but it was not until I brought the telescope to bear upon them that I could see they were holding an animated discussion.

The man who had motioned to us, and whom I took to be master of the ship, stood aft, in company with two others and a woman, and gesticulated very vehemently, sometimes pointing at us and sometimes at the sea.

His meaning was intelligible enough to me, but I was not disheartened; for though it was plain that he was representing the waves as too rough to permit them to lower a boat, which was a conclusive sign, at least, that those whom he addressed were urging him to save us; yet his refusal was

no proof that he did not mean to keep by us until it should be safe to send a boat to our ship.

"What will they do, Mr. Royle?" exclaimed Miss Robertson, speaking in a voice sharpened by the terrible excitement under which she laboured.

"They will not leave us," I answered. "They are men—and it is enough that they should have seen you among us to make them stay. Oh!" I cried, "it is hard that those waves do not subside! but patience. The wind is lulling—we have a long spell of daylight before us. Would to God she were an English ship!—I should have no fear then."

I again pointed the glass at the vessel.

The captain was still declaiming and gesticulating; but the men had withdrawn from the quarter-boat, and were watching us over the bulwarks.

Since the boat was not to be lowered, why did he continue arguing?

I watched him intently, watched him until my eyes grew bleared and the metal rim of the telescope seemed to burn into the flesh around my eye.

I put the glass down and turned to glance at the flags streaming over my head.

"There she goes! I knew it. They never shows no pity!" exclaimed the boatswain, in a deep voice.

I looked and saw the figures of the men hauling on the lee main-braces.

The yards swung round; the vessel's head paid off; they squared away forward, and in a few minutes her stern was at us, and she went away solemnly, rolling and plunging; the main top-gallant sail being sheeted home and the yard hoisted as she surged forward on her course.

We remained staring after her—no one

speaking—no one believing in the reality of what he beheld.

Of all the trials that had befallen us, this was the worst.

Of all the terrible, cruel disappointments that can afflict suffering people, none, *none* in all the hideous catalogue, is more deadly, more unendurable, more frightful to endure than that which it was our doom then to feel. To witness our salvation at hand and then to miss it; to have been buoyed up with hope unspeakable; to taste in the promise of rescue the joy of renovated life; to believe that our suffering was at an end, and that in a short time we should be among sympathetic rescuers, looking back with shudders upon the perils from which we had been snatched—to have felt all this, and then to be deceived!

I thought my heart would burst. I tried to speak, but my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth.

When the steward saw that we were abandoned, he uttered a loud scream and rushed headlong down into the cuddy.

I took no notice of him.

Cornish ran from the wheel, and springing on to the rail, shook his fist at the departing vessel, raving, and cursing her with horrible, blasphemous words, black in the face with his mad and useless rage.

The boatswain took his place and grasped the wheel, never speaking a word.

I was aroused from the stupor that had come over me, the effect of excessive emotion, by Miss Robertson putting her hand in mine.

"Be brave!" she whispered, with her mouth close to my ear. "God is with us still. My dead father would not deceive me. We shall be saved yet. Have courage, and be your own true self again!"

I looked into her shining eyes, out of

which all the excitement that had fired them while the Russian remained hove to, had departed. There was a beautiful tranquillity, there was a courage heaven-inspired, there was a soft and hopeful smile upon her pale face, which fell upon the tempest in my breast and stilled it.

God had given her this influence over me, and I yielded to it as though He Himself had commanded me.

All her own troubles came before me, all her own bitter trials, her miserable bereavement; and as I heard her sweet voice bidding me have courage, and beheld her smiling upon me out of her deep faith in her simple, sacred dream, I caught up both her hands and bent my head over them and wept.

"Cornish!" I cried, recovering myself, and seizing the man by the arm as he stood shouting at the fast-lessening ship, "what

is the use of those oaths? let them go their ways—the pitiless cowards. We are Englishmen, and our lives are still our own. Come, brave companion! we have all undergone too much to permit this trial to break us. See this lady! she swears that we shall be saved yet. Be of her heart and mine and the bo'sun's there, and help us to make another fight for it. Come!"

He suffered me to pull him off his perilous perch, and then sat himself down upon a coil of rope trembling all over, and hid his face in his hands.

But a new trouble awaited me.

At this moment the steward came staggering up the companion ladder, his face purple, his eyes protruding, and talking loudly and incoherently. He clasped the sea-chest belonging to himself, which certainly was of greater weight than he in his enfeebled state would have been able to

bear had he not been mad. The chest was corded, and he had no doubt packed it.

He rushed to the ship's side and pitched the chest overboard, and was in the act of springing on to the rail, meaning to fling himself into the sea, when I caught hold of him, and using more force than I was conscious of, dragged him backward so violently that his head struck the deck like a cannon shot, and he lay motionless and insensible.

"That's the best thing that could have happened to him," exclaimed the boatswain. "Let him lie a bit. He'll come to, and maybe leave his craze behind him. It wouldn't be the fust time I've seen a daft man knocked sensible."

And then, coolly biting a chew out of a stick of tobacco, which he very carefully replaced in his breeches pocket, he added—

"Jim, come and lay hold of this here

wheel, will yer, while me and Mr. Royle pumps the ship out!"

Cornish got up and took the boatswain's place.

"I can help you to pump, Mr. Royle!" said Miss Robertson.

The boatswain laughed.

"Lor' bless your dear 'art, miss, what next?" he cried. "No, no; you stand by here ready to knock this steward down agin if he shows hisself anxious to swim arter the Roosian. We'll see what water the ship's a-makin', and if she shows herself obstinate, as I raythor think she will, why, we'll all turn to and leave her. For you've got to deal with a bad ship as you would with a bad wife: use every genteel persuasion fust, and if that won't alter her, there's nothen for it but to grease your boots, oil your hair, and po-litely walk out."

CHAPTER IX.

THERE being but two of us now to work the pumps, it was more than we could do to keep them going. We plied them, with a brief spell between, and then my arms fell to my side, and I told the boatswain I could pump no more.

He sounded the well and made six inches.

"There's only two inches left that we can get out of her," said he; "and they'll do no harm."

On which we quitted the main-deck and came into the cuddy.

"Mr. Royle," he said, seating himself on the edge of the table, "we shall have to

leave this ship if we aren't taken off her. I reckon it'll require twelve feet o' water to sink her, allowin' for there being a deal o' wood in the cargo; and maybe she won't go down at that. However, we'll say twelve feet, and supposin' we lets her be, she'll give us, if you like, eight or nine hours afore settlin'. I'm not saying as we ought to leave her; but I'm lookin' at you, sir, and see that you're werry nigh knocked up; Cornish is about a quarter o' the man he was; an' as to the bloomin' steward, he's as good as drownded, no better and no worse. We shall take one spell too many at them pumps and fall down under it an' never get up agin. Wot we had best do is to keep a look all around for wessels, get that there quarter-boat ready for lowerin', and stand by to leave the ship when the sea calms. You know how Bermuda bears, don't you, sir?"

"I can find out to-night. It is too late to get sights now."

"I think," he returned, "that our lives 'll be as safe in the boat as they are on board this ship, an' a trifle safer. I've been watching this wessel a good deal, and my belief is that wos another gale to strike her, she'd make one o' her long plunges and go all to pieces like a pack o' cards when she got to the bottom o' the walley o' water. Of course, if this sea don't calm, we must make shift to keep her afloat until it do. You'll excuse me for talkin' as though I wos dictatin'. I'm just givin' you the thoughts that come into my head whilst we wos pumpin'."

"I quite agree with you," I replied; "I am only thinking of the size of the quarter-boat; whether she isn't too small for five persons?"

"Not she! I'll get a bit of a mast rigged

up in her and it'll go hard if we don't get four mile an hour out of her somehows. How fur might the Bermuda Islands be off?"

I answered, after reflecting some moments, that they would probably be distant from the ship between 250 and 300 miles.

"We should get pretty near 'em in three days," said he, "if the wind blew that way. Will you go an' tell the young lady what we're thinkin' o' doing while I overhauls the boat an' see what's wantin' in her? One good job is, we shan't have to put off through the ship sinkin' all of a heap. There's a long warning given us, and I can't help thinkin' that the stormy weather's blown hisself out, for the sky looks to me to have a regular set fair blue in it."

He went on to the main-deck. I inspected the glass, which I found had risen

since I last looked at it. This, coupled with the brilliant sky and glorious sunshine and the diminishing motion of the ship, cheered me somewhat, though I looked forward with misgiving to leaving the ship, having upon me the memory of the sufferings endured by shipwrecked men in this lonely condition, and remembering that Mary Robertson would be one of us, and have to share in any privations that might befall us.

At the same time, it was quite clear to me that the boatswain, Cornish, and myself would never, with our failing strength, be able to keep the ship afloat; and for Miss Robertson's sake, therefore, it was my duty to put a cheerful face upon the melancholy alternative.

When I reached the poop the first thing I beheld was the Russian barque, now a square of gleaming white upon the southern horizon.

I quickly averted my eyes from the shameful object, and saw that the steward had recovered from his swoon and was squatting against the companion counting his fingers and smiling at them.

Miss Robertson was steering the ship, while Cornish lay extended along the deck, his head pillowed on a flag.

The wind (as by the appearance of the weather I might have anticipated, had my mind been free to speculate on such things) had dropped suddenly, and was now a gentle breeze, and the sea was subsiding rapidly. Indeed, a most golden, glorious afternoon had set in, with a promise of a hot and breathless night.

I approached Miss Robertson, and asked her what was the matter with Cornish.

"I noticed him reeling at the wheel," she answered, "with his face quite white. I put a flag for his head, and told him to

lie down. I called to you, but you did not hear me; and I have been waiting to see you that you might get him some brandy."

I found that the boatswain had not yet come aft, and at once went below to procure a dram for Cornish. I returned and knelt by his side, and was startled to perceive that his eyeballs were turned up, and his hands and teeth clenched, as though he were convulsed. Sharp tremors ran through his body, and he made no reply nor appeared to hear me, though I called his name several times.

Believing that he was dying, I shouted to the boatswain, who came immediately.

The moment he looked at Cornish he uttered an exclamation.

"God knows what ails the poor creature!" I cried. "Lift his head, that I may get some brandy into his mouth."

The boatswain raised him by the shoulders, but his head hung back like a dead man's. I drew out my knife and inserted the blade between his teeth, and by this means contrived to introduce some brandy into his mouth, but it bubbled back again, which was a terrible sign, I thought; and still the tremors shook his poor body, and the eyes remained upturned, making the face most ghastly to see.

"It's his heart broke," exclaimed the boatswain, in a tremulous voice. "Jim, what's the matter with 'ee, mate? You're not goin' to let the sight o' that Roosian murderer kill you? Come, come! God Almighty knows we've all had a hard fight for it, but we're not beat yet, lad. 'Tis but another spell o' waitin', and it'll come right presently. Don't let a gale o' wind knock the breath out o' you. What man as goes to sea but meets with reverses like this

here? Swaller the brandy, Jim! . . . . My God! Mr. Royle, he's dyin'!"

As he said this Cornish threw up his arms and stiffened out his body. So strong was his dying action that he knocked the glass of brandy out of my hand and threw me backwards some paces. The pupils of his eyes rolled down, and a film came over them; he uttered something in a hoarse whisper, and lay dead on the boatswain's knee.

I glanced at Miss Robertson. Her lips were tightly compressed, otherwise the heroic girl showed no emotion.

The boatswain drew a deep breath and let the dead man's head fall gently on the flag.

"For Miss Robertson's sake," I whispered, "let us carry him forward."

He acquiesced in silence, and we bore the body off the poop and laid it on the fore-hatch.

"There will be no need to bury him," said I.

"No need and no time, sir. I trust God'll be merciful to the poor sailor when he's called up. He was made bad by them others, sir. His heart wasn't wrong," replied the boatswain.

I procured a blanket from the forecastle and covered the body with it, and we then walked back to the poop slowly and without speaking.

I felt the death of this man keenly. He had worked well, confronted danger cheerfully; he had atoned, in his untutored fashion, for the wrongs he had taken a part in—besides, the fellowship of peril was a tie upon us all, not to be sundered without a pang, which our hearts never would have felt had fate dealt otherwise with us.

I stopped a moment with the boatswain to look at the steward before joining Miss

Robertson. To many, I believe this spectacle of idiocy would have been more affecting than Cornish's death. He was tracing figures, such as circles and crosses, with his fore finger on the deck, smiling vacantly meanwhile, and now and then looking around him with rolling, unmeaning eyes.

"How is it with you, my man?" I said.

He gazed at me very earnestly, rose to his feet, and, taking my arm, drew me a short distance away from the boatswain.

"A ship passed us just now, sir," he exclaimed in a whisper, and with a profoundly confidential air. "Did you see her?"

"Yes, steward, I saw her."

"A word in your ear, sir—*mum!* that's the straight tip. Do you see? I was tired of this ship, sir—tired of being afraid of drowning. I put myself on board that

vessel, *and there I am now, sir.* But hush! do you know I cannot talk to them —they're furriners! Roosians, sir, by the living cock! that's my oath, and it crows every morning in my back garden."

He struck me softly on the waistcoat, and fell back a step, with his finger on his lip.

"Ah," said I, "I understand. Sit down again and go on drawing on the deck, and then they'll think you're lost in study and not trouble you."

"Right, my lord—your lordship's 'umble servant," answered the poor creature, making me a low bow; and with a lofty and dignified air he resumed his place on the deck near the companion.

"Wot was he sayin'?" inquired the boatswain.

"He is quite imbecile. He thinks he is on board the Russian," I replied.

"Well, that's a comfort," said the boatswain. "He'll not be tryin' to swim arter her agin."

"Miss Robertson," I exclaimed, "you need not remain at the wheel. There is so little wind now that the ship may be left to herself."

Saying which I made the wheel fast and led her to one of the skylights.

"Bo'sun," said I, "will you fetch us something to eat and drink out of the pantry? Open a tin of meat, and get some biscuit and wine. This may prove our last meal on board the *Grosvenor*," I added to Miss Robertson, as the boatswain left us.

She looked at me inquiringly, but did not speak.

"Before we knew," I continued, "that poor Cornish was dying, the boatswain and I resolved that we should all of us leave the ship. We have no longer the strength to

man the pumps. The water is coming in at the rate of a foot an hour, and we have found latterly that even three of us cannot pump more at a time out of her than six or seven inches, and every spell at the pumps leaves us more exhausted. But even though we had hesitated to leave her, yet now that Cornish is gone and the steward has fallen imbecile, we have no alternative."

"I understand," she said, glancing at the boat and compressing her lip.

"You are not afraid—you who have shown more heart and courage than all of us put together?"

"No—I am not much afraid. I believe that God is looking down upon us, and that He will preserve us. But," she cried, taking a short breath, and clasping her hands convulsively, "it will be very, very lonely on the great sea in that little boat."

"Why more lonely in that little boat than on this broken and sinking ship? I believe with you that God is looking down upon us, and that He has given us that pure and beautiful sky as an encouragement and a promise. Contrast the sea now with what it was this morning. In a few hours hence it will be calm; and believe me when I say that we shall be a thousandfold safer in that boat than we are in this strained and leaking ship. Even while we talk now the water is creeping into the hold, and every hour will make her sink deeper and deeper until she disappears beneath the surface. On the other hand, we may have many days together of this fine weather. I will steer the boat for the Bermuda Islands, which we cannot miss by heading the boat west, even if I should lack the means of ascertaining our exact whereabouts, which you may trust me will not be

the case. Moreover, the chance of our being rescued by a passing ship will be much greater when we are in the boat than it is while we remain here; for no ship, though she were commanded by a savage, would refuse to pick a boat up and take its occupants on board; whereas vessels, as we have already discovered to our cost, will sight distressed ships and leave them to shift for themselves."

"I do not doubt you are right," she replied, with a plaintive smile. "I should not say or do anything to oppose you. And believe me," she exclaimed earnestly, "that I do not think more of my own life than of that of my companions. Death is not so terrible but that we may meet it, if God wills, calmly. And I would rather die at once, Mr. Royle, than win a few short years of life on hard and bitter terms."

She looked at the steward as she spoke, and an expression of beautiful pity came into her face.

"Miss Robertson," I said, "in my heart I am pledged to save your life. If you die, we both die!—of that be sure."

"I know what I owe you," she answered, in a low and broken voice. "I know that my life is yours, won by you from the very jaws of death, soothed and supported by you afterwards. What my gratitude is only God knows. I have no words to tell you."

"Do you give me the life I have saved?" I asked, wondering at my own breathless voice as I questioned her.

"I do," she replied firmly, lifting up her eyes and looking at me.

"Do you give it to me because your sweet and generous gratitude makes you think it my due?—not knowing I am poor,

not remembering that my station in life is humble, without a question as to my past?"

"I give it to you because I love you!" she answered, extending her hand.

I drew her towards me and kissed her forehead.

"God bless you, Mary darling, for your faith in me! God bless you for your priceless gift of your love to me! Living or dead, dearest, we are one!"

And she, as though to seal these words which our danger invested with an entrancing mysteriousness, raised my hand to her spotless lips, and then held it for some moments to her heart.

The boatswain, coming up the poop ladder, saw her holding my hand. He approached us slowly, and in silence; and putting down the tray, which he had heaped with sailor-like profusion with food

enough for a dozen persons, stood looking on us thoughtfully.

"Mr. Royle," he said, in a deliberate voice, "you'll excuse me for sayin' of it, but, sir, you've found her out?"

"I have, bo'sun."

"You've found her out, sir, as the truest-hearted gell as ever did duty as a darter?"

"I have."

"I've watched her, and know her to be British — true oak-seasoned, by God Almighty, as does this sort o' work better nor Time! You've found her out, sir?"

"It is true, bo'sun."

"And you, miss," he exclaimed, in the same deliberate voice, "have found *him* out?"

She looked downwards with a little blush.

"Mr. Royle, and you, miss," he continued, "I'm not goin' to say nothen agin this being the right time to find each other

out in. It's Almighty Providence as brings these here matters to pass, and it's in times o' danger as love speaks out strongest, turnin' the heart into a speakin' trumpet and hailin' with a loud and tremendious woice. Wot I wur goin' to say is this: that in Mr. Royle I've seen the love for a long while past burnin' and strugglin', and sometimes hidin' of itself, and then burstin' up afresh, like a flare aboard o' a sinkin' ketch on a windy night; and in you, miss, I've likewise seen tokens as 'ud ha' made me up and speak my joy days an' days ago, had it been *my* consarn to attend to 'em. I say, that now as we're sinkin' without at all meanin' to drown, with no wun but God Almighty to see us, this is the properest time for you to have found each other out in. Mr. Royle, your hand, sir; miss, yours. I say, God bless you! Whilst we have breath we'll keep the boat afloat; and

if it's not to be, still I'll say, God bless you!"

He shook us heartily by the hand, looked hard at the poor steward, as though he would shake hands with him too; then walked aft, hauled down the signals, stepped into the cuddy, returned with the large ensign, bent it on to the halliards, and ran it up to the gaff-end.

"That," said he, returning and looking up proudly at the flag, "is to let them as it may consarn know that we're not dead yet. Now, sir, shall I pipe to dinner?"

CHAPTER X.

I THINK the boatswain was right.

It was no season for love-making; but it was surely a fitting moment "for finding each other out in."

I can say this—and God knows never was their less bombast in such a thought than there was in mine: that when I looked round upon the sea and then upon my beloved companion, I felt that I would rather have chosen death with her love to bless me in the end, than life without knowledge of her.

I put food before the steward and induced him to eat; but it was pitiful to see his silly, instinctive ways, no reason in them,

nothing but a mechanical guiding, with foolish fleeting smiles upon his pale face.

I thought of that wife of his whose letter he had wept over, and his child, and scarcely knew whether it had not been better for him and them that he should have died than return to them a broken-down, puling imbecile.

I said as much to Mary, but the tender heart would not agree with me.

"Whilst there is life there is hope," she answered softly. "Should God permit us to reach home, I will see that the poor fellow is well cared for. It may be that when all these horrors have passed his mind will recover its strength. Our trials are *very* hard. When I saw that Russian ship I thought my own brain would go."

She pressed her hand to her forehead, and an expression of suffering, provoked by memory, came into her face.

We despatched our meal, and I went on to the main-deck to sound the well. I found two feet of water in the hold, and I came back and gave the boatswain the soundings, who recommended that we should at once turn to and get the boat ready.

I said to him, as he clambered into the boat for the purpose of overhauling her, that I fully believed that a special Providence was watching over us, and that we might confidently hope God would not abandon us now.

"If the men had not chased us in this boat," I continued, "what chance should we have to save our lives? The other boat is useless, and we should never have been able to repair her in time to get away from the ship. Then look at the weather! I have predicted a dead calm to-night, and already the wind is gone."

"Yes, everything's happened for the best," he replied. "I only wish poor Jim's life had been saved. It's a'most like leavin' of him to drown to go away without buryin' him; and yet I know there'd be no use in puttin' him overboard. There's been a deal o' precious human life wasted since we left the Channel; and who are the murderers? Wy, the owners. It's all come through their sendin' the ship to sea with rotten stores. A few dirty pounds 'ud ha' saved all this."

We had never yet had the leisure to inspect the stores with which the mutineers had furnished the quarter-boat, and we now found, in spite of their having shifted a lot of the provisions out of her into the long-boat before starting in pursuit of us, that there was still an abundance left: four kegs of water, several tins of cuddy bread, preserved meat and fruits, sugar, flour, and other things, not to mention such items as

boxes of lucifer-matches, fishing tackle, a burning-glass, a quantity of tools and nails; in a word, everything which men in the condition they had hoped to find themselves in might stand in need of to support life. Indeed, the foresight illustrated by the provisioning of this boat was truly remarkable, the only things they had omitted being a mast and sail, it having been their intention to keep this boat in tow of the other. I even found that they had furnished the boat with the oars belonging to the disabled quarter-boat in addition to those of her own.

However, the boat was not yet stocked to my satisfaction. I therefore repaired to my cabin and procured the boat's compass, some charts, a sextant, and other necessary articles, such as the "Nautical Almanack," and pencils and paper wherewith to work out my observations, which articles I placed

very carefully in the locker in the stern-sheets of the boat.

I allowed Mary to help me, that the occupation might divert her mind from the overwhelming thoughts which the gradual settling of the ship on which we stood must have excited in the strongest and bravest mind; and, indeed, I worked busily and eagerly to guard myself against any terror that might come upon me. She it was who suggested that we should provide ourselves with lamps and oil; and I shipped a lantern to hoist at our mast-head when the darkness came, and the bull's-eye lamp to enable me to work out observations of the stars, which I intended to make when the night fell. To all these things, which, sounding numerous, in reality occupied but little space, I added a can of oil, meshes for the lamps, top-coats, oilskins, and rugs to protect us at night, so that the afternoon

was well advanced before we had ended our preparations. Meanwhile, the boatswain had stepped a top-gallant stun'sail boom to serve us for a mast, well stayed, with a block and halliards at the mast-head to serve for hoisting a flag or lantern, and a spare top-gallant stun'sail to act as a sail.

By this time the wind had completely died away; a peaceful deep blue sky stretched from horizon to horizon; and the agitation of the sea had subsided into a long and silent swell, which washed up against the ship's sides, scarcely causing her to roll, so deep had she sunk in the water.

I now thought it high time to lower the boat and bring her alongside, as our calculations of the length of time to be occupied by the ship in sinking might be falsified to our destruction by her suddenly going stern down with us on board.

We therefore lowered the boat, and got the gangway ladder over the side.

The boatswain got into the boat first to help Mary into her. I then took the steward by the arms and brought him along smartly, as there was danger in keeping the boat washing against the ship's side. He resisted at first, and only smiled vacantly when I threatened to leave him; but on the boatswain crying out that his wife was waiting for him, the poor idiot got himself together with a scramble, and went so hastily over the gangway that he very narrowly escaped a ducking.

I paused a moment at the gangway and looked around, striving to remember if there was anything we had forgotten which would be of some use to us. Mary watched me anxiously, and called to me by my Christian name, at the same time extending her arms. I would not keep her in suspense a moment,

and at once dropped into the boat. She grasped and fondled my hand, and drew me close beside her.

"I should have gone on board again had you delayed coming," she whispered.

The boatswain shoved the boat's head off, and we each shipped an oar and pulled the boat about a quarter of a mile away from the ship; and then, from a strange and wild curiosity to behold the ship sink, and still in our hearts clinging to her, not only as the home wherein we had found shelter for many days past, but as the only visible object in all the stupendous reach of waters, we threw in the oars and sat watching her.

She had now sunk as deep as her main-chains, and was but a little higher out of water than the hull from which we had rescued Mary and her father. It was strange to behold her even from a short distance and note her littleness in com-

parison with the immensity of the deep on which she rested, and recall the terrible seas she had braved and triumphed over.

Few sailors can behold the ship in which they have sailed sinking before their eyes without the same emotion of distress and pity almost which the spectacle of a drowning man excites in them. She has grown a familiar name, a familiar object; thus far she has borne them in safety; she has been rudely beaten, and yet has done her duty; but the tempest has broken her down at last; all the beauty is shorn from her; she is weary with the long and dreadful struggle with the vast forces that Nature arrayed against her; she sinks, a desolate abandoned thing in mid-ocean, carrying with her a thousand memories, which surge up in the heart with the pain of a strong man's tears.

I looked from the ship to realize our own

position. Perhaps not yet could it be keenly felt, for the ship was still a visible object for us to hold on by; and yet, turning my eyes away to the far reaches of the horizon, at one moment borne high on the summit of the ocean swell, which appeared mountainous when felt in and viewed from the boat, then sinking deep in the hollow, so that the near ship was hidden from us—the supreme loneliness of our situation, our helplessness, and the fragility and diminutiveness of the structure on which our lives depended, came home to me with the pain and wonder of a shock.

Our boat, however, was new this voyage, with a good beam, and showing a tolerably bold side, considering her dimensions and freight. Of the two quarter-boats with which the *Grosvenor* had been furnished, this was the larger and the stronger built, and for this reason had been chosen by

Stevens. I could not hope, indeed, that she would live a moment in anything of a sea; but she was certainly stout enough to carry us to the Bermudas, providing the weather remained moderate.

It was now six o'clock. I said to the boatswain—

"Every hour of this weather is valuable to us. There is no reason why we should stay here."

"I should like to see her sink, Mr. Royle; I should like to know that poor Jim found a regular coffin in her," he answered. "We can't make no headway with the sail, and I don't recommend rowin' for the two or three mile we can fetch with the oars. It 'ud be wurse nor pumpin'!"

He was right. When I reflected I was quite sure I should not, in my exhausted state, be able to handle one of the big oars for even five minutes at a stretch; and

admitting that I *had* been strong enough to row for a couple of hours, yet the result to have been obtained could not have been important enough to justify the serious labour.

The steward all this time sat perfectly quiet in the bottom of the boat, with his back against the mast. He paid no attention to us when we spoke, nor looked around him, though sometimes he would fix his eyes vacantly on the sky as if his shattered mind found relief in contemplating the void. I was heartily glad to find him quiet, though I took care to watch him, for it was difficult to tell whether his imbecility was not counterfeited by his madness, to throw us off our guard, and furnish him with an opportunity to play us and himself some deadly trick.

As some hours had elapsed since we had tasted food, I opened a tin of meat and pre-

pared a meal. The boatswain ate heartily, and so did the steward; but I could not prevail upon Mary to take more than a biscuit and some sherry and water.

Indeed, as the evening approached, our position affected her more deeply, and very often, after she had cast her eyes towards the horizon, I would see her lips whispering a prayer, and feel her hand tightening on mine.

The ship still floated, but she was so low in the water that I every minute expected to see her vanish. The water was above her main-chains, and I could only attribute her obstinacy in not sinking to the great quantity of wood—both in cases and goods —which composed her cargo.

The sun was now quite close to the horizon, branding the ocean with a purple glare, but itself descending into a cloudless sky. I cannot express how majestic and

wonderful the great orb looked to us who were almost level with the water. Its disc seemed vaster than I had ever before seen it, and there was something sublimely solemn in the loneliness of its descent. All the sky about it, and far to the south and north, was changed into the colour of gold by its lustre; and over our heads the heavens were an exquisite tender green, which melted in the east into a dark blue.

I was telling Mary that ere the sun sank again we might be on board a ship, and whispering any words of encouragement and hope to her, when I was startled by the boatswain crying, "Now she's gone! Look at her!"

I turned my eyes towards the ship, and could scarcely credit my senses when I found that her hull had vanished, and that nothing was to be seen of her but her spars, which were all aslant sternwards.

I held my breath as I saw the masts sink lower and lower. First the crossjack-yard was submerged, then the gaff with the ensign hanging dead at the peak, then the mainyard; presently only the main-top-mast cross-trees were visible, a dark cross upon the water: they vanished; at the same moment the sun disappeared behind the horizon; and now we were alone on the great, breathing deep, with all the eastern sky growing dark as we watched.

"It's all over!" said the boatswain, breaking the silence, and speaking in a hollow tone. "No livin' man'll ever see the *Grosvenor* agin!"

Mary shivered and leaned against me. I took up a rug and folded it round her, and kissed her forehead.

The boatswain had turned his back upon us, and sat with his hands folded, I believe in prayer. I am sure he was thinking of

Jim Cornish, and I would not have interrupted that honest heart's communion with its Maker for the value of the ship that had sunk.

Darkness came down very quickly, and that we might lose no chance of being seen by any distant vessel, I lighted the ship's lantern and hoisted it at the mast-head. I also lighted the bull's-eye lamp and set it in the stern-sheets.

"Mary," I whispered, "I will make you up a bed in the bottom of the boat. Whilst this weather lasts, dearest, we have no cause to be alarmed by our position. It will make me happy to see you sleeping, and be sure that whilst you sleep there will be watchful eyes near you."

"I will sleep as I am, here, by your side. I shall rest better so," she answered. "I could not sleep lying down."

It was too sweet a privilege to forego: I

passed my arm around her and held her close to me; and she closed her eyes like a child to please me.

Worn out as I was, enfeebled both intellectually and physically by the heavy strain that had been put upon me ever since that day when I had been ironed by Captain Coxon's orders, I say—and I solemnly believe in the truth of what I am about to write—that had it not been for the living reality of this girl, encircled by my arm, with her head supported by my shoulder—had it not been for the deep love I felt for her, which localized my thoughts, and, so to say, humanized them down to the level of our situation, forbidding them to trespass beyond the prosaic limits of our danger, of the precautions to be taken by us, of our chances of rescue, of the course to be steered when the wind should fill our sail: I should have gone mad when the night

came down upon the sea and enveloped our boat—a lonely speck on the gigantic world of water—in the mystery and fear of darkness. I know this by recalling the fancy that for a few moments possessed me in looking along the water, when I clearly beheld the outline of a coast, with innumerable lights twinkling upon it; by the whirling, dizzy sensation in my head which followed the extinction of the vision; by the emotion of wild horror and unutterable disappointment which overcame me when I detected the cheat. I pressed my darling to me, and looked upon her sweet face, revealed by the light shed by the lantern at the mast-head, and all my misery left me; and the delight which the knowledge that she was my own love and that I held her in my arms, gave me, fell like an exorcism upon the demons of my stricken imagination.

She smiled when I pressed her to my side and when she saw my face close to hers, looking at her; but she did not know then that she had saved me from a fate more dreadful than death, and that I—so strong as I seemed, so earnest as I had shown myself in my conflicts with fate, so resolutely as I had striven to comfort her—had been rescued from madness by her whom I had a thousand times pitied for her helplessness.

She fell asleep at last, and I sat for nearly two hours motionless, that I should not awaken her. The steward slept with his head in his arms, kneeling, a strange, mad posture. The boatswain sat forward, with his face turned aft and his arms folded. I addressed him once, but he did not answer. Probably I spoke too low for him to hear, being fearful of waking Mary; but there was little we had to say. Doubt-

less he found his thoughts too engrossing to suffer him to talk.

Being anxious to "take a star," as we say at sea, and not knowing how the time went, I gently drew out my watch and found the hour a quarter to eleven. In replacing the watch I aroused Mary, who raised her head and looked round her with eyes that flashed in the lantern light.

"Where are we?" she exclaimed, and bent her head to gaze at me, on which she recollected herself. "Poor boy!" she said, taking my hand, "I have kept you supporting my weight. You were more tired than I. But it is your turn now. Rest your head on my shoulder."

"No, it is still your turn," I answered, "and you shall sleep again presently. But since you are awake, I will try to find out where we are. You shall hold the lamp for me while I make my calculations and examine the chart."

Saying which, I drew out my sextant and got across the thwarts to the mast, which I stood up alongside of to lean on, for the swell, though moderate enough to pass without notice on a big vessel, lifted and sunk the boat in such a way as to make it difficult to stand steady.

I was in the act of raising the sextant to my eye, when the boatswain suddenly cried, "Mr. Royle, listen!"

"What do you hear?" I exclaimed.

"Hush! listen now!" he answered, in a breathless voice.

I strained my ear, but nothing was audible to me but the wash of the water against the boat's side.

"Don't you hear it, Mr. Royle?" he cried, in a kind of agony, holding up his finger. "Miss Robertson, don't you hear something?"

There was another interval of silence, and

Mary answered, "I hear a kind of throbbing!"

"It is so!" I exclaimed. "I hear it now! it is the engines of a steamer!"

"A steamer! Yes! I heard it! where is she?" shouted the boatswain, and he jumped on to the thwart on which I stood.

We strained our ears again.

That throbbing sound, as Mary had accurately described it, closely resembling the rythmical running of a locomotive engine heard in the country on a silent night at a long distance, was now distinctly audible; but so smooth was the water, so breathless the night, that it was impossible to tell how far away the vessel might be; for so fine and delicate a vehicle of sound is the ocean in a calm, that, though the hull of a steamship might be below the horizon, yet the thumping of her engines would be heard.

Once more we inclined our ears, holding our breath as we listened.

"It grows louder!" cries the boatswain. "Mr. Royle, bend your bull's-eye lamp to the end o' one o' the oars and swing it about whilst I dip this mast-head lantern."

Very different was his manner now from what it had been that morning when the Russian hove in sight.

I lashed the lamp by the ring of it to an oar and waved it to and fro. Meanwhile the boatswain had got hold of the mast-head halliards, and was running the big ship's lantern up and down the mast.

"Mary," I exclaimed, "lift up the seat behind you, and in the left-hand corner you will find a pistol."

"I have it," she answered, in a few moments.

"Point it over the stern and fire!" I cried.

She levelled the little weapon and pulled the trigger, the white flame leapt, and a smart report followed.

"Listen now!" I said.

I held the oar steady, and the boatswain ceased to dance the lantern. For the first few seconds I heard nothing, then my ear caught the throbbing sound.

"I see her!" cried the boatswain; and following his finger (my sight being keener than my hearing) I saw not only the shadow of a vessel down in the south-west, but the smoke from her funnel pouring along the stars.

"Mary," I cried, "fire again!"

She drew the trigger.

"Again!"

The clear report whizzed like a bullet passed my ears.

Simultaneously with the second report a ball of blue fire shot up into the sky. Another followed, and another.

A moment after a red light shone clear upon the sea.

"She sees us!" I cried. "God be praised! Mary, darling, she sees us!"

I waved the lamp furiously. But there was no need to wave it any longer. The red light drew nearer and nearer; the throbbing of the engines louder and louder, and the revolutions of the propeller sounded like a pulse beating through the water.

The shadow broadened and loomed larger. I could hear the water spouting out of her side and the blowing off of the safety-valve.

Soon the vessel grew a defined shape against the stars, and then a voice, thinned by the distance, shouted, "What light is that?"

I cried to the boatswain, "Answer, for God's sake! My voice is weak."

He hollowed his hands and roared back,

"We're shipwrecked seamen adrift in a quarter-boat!"

Nearer and nearer came the shadow, and now it was a long, black hull, a funnel pouring forth a dense volume of smoke, spotted with fire-sparks, and tapering masts and fragile rigging, with the stars running through them.

"Ease her!"

The sound of the throbbing grew more measured. We could hear the water as it was churned up by the screw.

"Stop her!"

The sounds ceased, and the vessel came looming up slowly, more slowly, until she stopped.

"What is that?—a boat?" exclaimed a strong bass voice.

"Yes!" answered the boatswain. "We've been shipwrecked; we're adrift in a quarter-boat."

"Can you bring her alongside?"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

I threw out an oar, but trembled so violently that it was as much as I could do to work it. We headed the boat for the steamer, and rowed towards her. As we approached I perceived that she was very long, barque-rigged, and raking, manifestly a powerful, iron-built, ocean steamer. They had hung a red light on the forestay, and a white light over her port quarter, and lights flitted about her gangway.

A voice sang out, "How many are there of you?"

The boatswain answered, "Three men and a lady!"

On this the same voice called, "If you want help to bring the boat alongside we'll send to you."

"We'll be alongside in a few minutes," returned the boatswain.

But the fact was the vessel had stopped her engines when further off from us than we had imagined; being deceived by the magnitude of her looming hull, which seemed to stand not a hundred fathoms away from us and by the wonderful distinctness of the voice that had spoken us.

I did not know how feeble I had become until I took the oar, and the violent emotions excited in me by our rescue now to be effected after our long and heavy trials, diminished still the little strength that was left in me, so that the boat moved very slowly through the water, and it was full twenty minutes, starting from the time when we had shipped the oars, before we came up with her.

"We'll fling you a rope's end," said a voice; "look out for it."

A line fell into the boat; the boatswain caught it and sang out "All fast!"

I looked up the high side of the steamer: there was a crowd of men assembled round the gangway, their faces visible in the light shed not only by our own mast-head lantern (which was on a level with the steamer's bulwarks) but by other lanterns which some of them held. In all this light we, the occupants of the boat, were to be clearly viewed from the deck; and the voice that had first addressed us said—

"Are you strong enough to get up the ladder? if not we'll sling you on board."

I answered that if a couple of hands would come down into the boat so as to help the lady and a man (who had fallen imbecile) over the ship's side, the other two would manage to get on board without assistance.

On this a short gangway ladder was lowered, and two men descended and got into the boat.

"Take that lady first," I said, pointing to Mary, but holding on as I spoke to the boat's mast, for I felt horribly sick and faint, and knew not, indeed, what was going to happen to me; and I had to exert all my power to steady my voice.

They took her by the arms, and watching the moment when the wash of the swell brought the boat against the ship's side, landed her cleverly on the ladder and helped her on to the deck.

"Bo'sun," I cried huskily, "she . . she is . . saved . . I am dying, I think. . . . God bless her! and . . and . . your hand, mate. . . ."

I remember uttering these incoherent words and seeing the boatswain spring forward to catch me. Then my senses left me with a flash.

CHAPTER XI.

I REMAINED, as I was afterwards informed, insensible for four days, during which time I told and re-told in my delirium the story of the mutiny and our own sufferings, so that, as the ship's surgeon assured me, he became very exactly acquainted with all the particulars of the *Grosvenor's* voyage, from the time of her leaving the English Channel to the moment of our rescue from the boat, though I, from whom he learnt the story, was insensible as I related it. My delirium even embraced so remote an incident as the running down of the smack.

When I opened my eyes I found myself in a small, very comfortable cabin, lying in a bunk; and being alone, I had no knowledge of where I was, nor would my memory give me the slightest assistance. That every object my eye rested upon was unfamiliar, and that I was on board a ship, was all that I knew for certain. What puzzled me most was the jarring sound caused by the engines. I could not conceive what this meant nor what produced it; and the vessel being perfectly steady, it was not in my power to realize that I was being borne over the water.

I closed my eyes and lay perfectly still, striving to master the past and inform myself of what had become of me; but so hopelessly muddled was my brain, that had some unseen person, by way of a joke, told me in a sepulchral voice that I was dead and apprehending the things about me only

by means of my spirit, which had not yet had time to get out of my body, I should have believed him; though I don't say that I should not have been puzzled to reconcile my very keen appetite and thirst with my non-existent condition.

In a few minutes the door of the cabin was opened and a jolly, red-faced man, wearing a Scotch cap, looked in. Seeing me with my eyes open, he came forward and exclaimed in a cheerful voice—

"All alive O! Staring about you full of wonderment! Nothing so good as curiosity in a sick man. Shows that the blood is flowing."

He felt my pulse, and asked me if I knew who he was.

I replied that I had never seen him before.

"Well, that's not my fault," said he; "for I've been looking at you a pretty tidy

while on and off since we hoisted you out of the brine.

'Guid speed an' furder to you, Johnny;
Guid health, hale han's, an' weather bonnie;
May ye ne'er want a stoup o' brany
To clear your head!'

Hungry?"

"Very," said I.

"Thirsty?"

"Yes."

"How do you feel in yourself?"

"I have been trying to find out. I don't know. I forget who I am."

"Raise your arm and try your muscles."

"I can raise my arm," I said, doing so.

"How's your memory?"

"If you'll give me a hint or two, I'll see."

He looked at me very earnestly and with much kindness in the expression of his jovial face, and debated some matter in his own mind.

"I'll send you in some beef-tea," he said, "by a person who'll be able to do you more good than I can. But don't excite yourself. Converse calmly, and don't talk too much."

So saying he went away.

I lay quite still and my memory remained as helpless as though I had just been born.

After an interval of about ten minutes the door was again opened and Mary came in. She closed the door and approached me, holding a cup of beef-tea in her hand, but however she had schooled herself to behave, her resolution forsook her; she put the cup down, threw her arms round my neck, and sobbed with her cheek against mine.

With my recognition of her my memory returned to me.

"My darling," I cried, in a weak voice, "is it you indeed! Oh, God is very merciful to have spared us. I remembered

nothing just now; but all has come back to me with your dear face."

She was too overcome to speak for some moments, but raising herself presently she said in broken tones—

"I thought I should never see you again, never be able to speak to you more. But I am wicked to give way to my feelings when I have been told that any excitement must be dangerous to my darling. Drink this, now—no, I will hold the cup to your lips. Strength has been given me to bear the sufferings we have gone through, that I may nurse you and bring you back to health."

I would not let go her hand; but when I attempted to prop myself up, I found my elbow would not sustain me; so I lay back and drank from the cup which she held to my mouth.

"How long is it," I asked her, "since we were taken on board this vessel?"

"Four days. Do you know that you fell down insensible in the boat the moment after I had been carried on to the deck of this ship? The men crowded around me and held their lanterns to my face, and I found that most of them were Scotch by their exclamations. A woman took me by the hand to lead me away, but I refused to move one step until I saw that you were on board. She told me that you had fainted in the boatswain's arms, and others cried out that you were dead. I saw them bring you up out of the boat, and told the woman that I must go with you and see where they put you, and asked if there was a doctor on board. She said yes, and that he was that man in the Scotch cap and greatcoat, who was helping the others to take you downstairs. I took your poor senseless hands and cried bitterly over them, and told the doctor I would go on

my knees to him if he would save your life. Bnt he was very kind—very kind and gentle."

"And you, Mary? I saw you keep up your wonderful courage to the last."

"I fainted when the doctor took me away from you," she answered, with one of her sweet, wistful smiles. "I slept far into the next day, and I rose quite well yesterday morning, and have been by your side nearly ever since. It is rather hard upon me that your consciousness should have returned when I had left the cabin for a few minutes."

I made her turn her face to the light that I might see her clearly, and found that though her mental and physical sufferings had left traces on her calm and beautiful face, yet on the whole she looked fairly well in health; her eyes bright, her complexion clear, and her lips red, with a firm expres-

sion on them. I also took notice that she was well dressed in a black silk, though probably I was not good critic enough just then in such matters to observe that it fitted her ill, and did no manner of justice to her lovely shape.

She caught me looking at the dress, and told me with a smile that it had been lent to her by a lady passenger.

"Why do you stand?" I said.

"The doctor only allowed me to see you on condition that I did not stay above five minutes."

"That is nonsense. I cannot let you go now you are here. Your dear face gives me back all the strength I have lost. How came I to fall down insensible? I am ashamed of myself! I, a sailor, supposed to be inured to all kinds of privation, to be cut adrift from my senses by a shipwreck! Mary, you are fitter to be a sailor than I.

After this, let me buy a needle and thread, and advertise for needlework."

"You are talking too much. I shall leave you."

"You cannot while I hold your hand."

"Am I not stronger than you?"

"In all things stronger, Mary. You have been my guardian angel. You interceded for my life with God, and He heard you when He would not have heard me."

She placed her hand on my mouth.

"You are talking too much, I say. You reproach yourself for your weakness, but try to remember what you have gone through: how you had to baffle the mutineers—to take charge of the ship—to save our lives from their terrible designs. Remember, too, that for days together you scarcely closed your eyes in sleep, that you did the work of a whole crew during the storm—dearest, what you have gone through would

have broken many a man's heart or driven him mad. It has left you your own true self for me to love and cherish whilst God shall spare us to each other."

She kissed me on the mouth, drew her hand from mine, and with a smile full of tender affection left the cabin.

I was vexed to lose her even for a short time; and still chose to think myself a poor creature for falling ill and keeping to my bed, when I might be with her about the ship and telling the people on board the story of her misfortunes and beautiful courage.

It was a mistake of the doctor's to suppose that *her* conversation could hurt me.

I had no idea of the time, and stared hard at the bull's-eye over my head, hoping to discover by the complexion of the light that it was early in the day, so that I might again see Mary before the night came. I was

even rash enough to imagine that I had the strength to rise, and made an effort to get out of the bunk, which gave me just the best illustration I could wish that I was as weak as a baby. So I tumbled back with a groan of disappointment, and after staring fixedly at the bull's-eye, I fell asleep.

This sleep lasted some hours. I awoke, not as I had first awakened from insensibility, with tremors and bewilderment, but easily, with a delicious sense of warmth and rest and renewing vigour in my limbs.

I opened my eyes upon three persons standing near the bunk; one was Mary, the other the doctor, and the third a thin, elderly, sunburnt man, in a white waistcoat with gold buttons and a blue cloth loose coat.

The doctor felt my pulse, and letting fall my hand, said to Mary—

"Now, Miss Robertson, Mr. Royle will

do. If you will kindly tell the steward to give you another basin of broth, you will find our patient able to make a meal."

She kissed her hand to me behind the backs of the others, and went out with a beaming smile.

"This is Captain Craik, Mr. Royle," continued the doctor, motioning to the gentleman in the white waistcoat, "commanding this vessel, the *Peri*."

I at once thanked him earnestly for his humanity, and the kindness he was showing me.

"Indeed," he replied, "I am very pleased with my good fortune in rescuing so brave a pair of men as yourself and your boatswain, and happy to have been the instrument of saving the charming girl to whom you are betrothed from the horror of exposure in an open boat. I have had the whole of your story from Miss Robertson, and I can only

say that you have acted very heroically and honourably."

I replied that I was very grateful to him for his kind words; but I assured him that I only deserved a portion of his praise. The man who truly merited admiration was the boatswain.

"You shall divide the honours," he said, smiling. "The bo'sun is already a hero. My crew seem disposed to worship him. If you have nothing better for him in your mind, you may hand him over to me. I know the value of such men now-a-days, when so much is left to the crimp."

Saying this, he went to the door and called; and immediately my old companion, the boatswain, came in. I held out my hand, and it was clutched by the honest fellow and held with passionate cordiality.

"Mr. Royle, sir," he exclaimed, in a faltering voice, "this is a happy moment

for me. There wos a time when I never thought I should ha' seen you alive agin, and it went to my heart, and made me blubber like any old woman when I thought o' your dyin' arter all the trouble you've seen, and just when, if I may be so bold as to say it, you might be hopin' to marry the brave, high-sperrited gell as you saved from drownin', and who belongs to you by the will o' God Almighty. Captain Craik, sir—I speak by your favour, and ax pardon for the liberty—this gen'man and me has seen some queer starts together since we fust shipped aboard the *Grosvenor* in the West Hindie Docks, and," he cried with vehemence, "I'd sooner ha' lost the use o' my right arm an' leg—yes, an' you may chuck my right eye in along with them—than Mr. Royle should ha' died just as he was agoin' to live properly and set down on the bench o' matrimony an' happiness with a bold and handsome wife!"

This eloquent harangue he delivered with a moist eye, addressing us all three in turn. I thanked him heartily for what he had said, but limited my reply to this: for though I could have complimented him more warmly than he had praised me, I considered that it would be more becoming to hold over all mutual admiration and you-and-me glorification until we should be alone.

I observed that he wore a velvet waistcoat, and carried a shiny cloth cap with a brilliant peak, very richly garnished with braid; and as such articles of raiment could only emanate from the forecastle, I concluded that they were gifts from the crew, and that Captain Craik had reason in thinking that the boatswain had become a hero.

The doctor shortly after this motioned him to go, whereon he gave a shipshape

salute, by tweaking an imaginary curl on his forehead, and went away.

I now asked what had become of the steward. Captain Craik answered that the man was all right so far as his health went; that he wandered about the decks very harmlessly, smiling in the faces of the men, and seldom speaking.

"One peculiarity of the poor creature," said he, "is that he will not taste any kind of food but what is served out to the crew. I have myself tried him with dishes from the saloon table, but could not induce him to touch a mouthful. The first time I tried him in this way he fell from me as though I had offered to cut his throat; the perspiration poured from his forehead, and he eyed me with looks of the utmost horror and aversion. Can you account for this?"

"Yes, sir," I replied. "The steward was in the habit of serving out the ship's stores

to the crew of the *Grosvenor*. He rather sided with the captain, and tried to make the best of what was outrageously bad. When the men mutinied they threatened to hang him if he touched any portion of the cuddy stores, and I dare say they would have executed their threat. He was rather a coward before he lost his reason, and the threat affected him violently. I myself never could induce him to taste any other food than the ship's rotten stores whilst the men remained in the vessel, and I dare say the memory of the threat still lives in his broken mind."

"Thanks for your explanation," said the doctor, "I shall sleep the better for it; for, upon my word, the man's unnatural dislike of good food—of *entrées*, man, and curried fowl and roast goose, for I tried him myself—has kept me awake bothering my head to understand."

"May I ask what vessel this is?" I said, addressing Captain Craik.

"The *Peri*, of Glasgow, homeward-bound from Jamaica," he answered.

"I know the ship now, sir. She belongs to the —— Line."

"Quite right. We shall hope to put you ashore in seven days hence. It is curious that I should have known Mr. Robertson, your lady's father. I called upon him a few years since in Liverpool, on business, and had a long conversation with him. Little could I have dreamt that his end would be so sad, and that it should be reserved for me to rescue his daughter from an open boat, in mid-Atlantic!"

"Ah, sir," I exclaimed, "no one but I can ever know the terrible trials this poor girl has passed through. She has been twice shipwrecked within three weeks; she has experienced all the horrors of a mutiny;

she has lost her father under circumstances which would have killed many girls with grief; she has been held in terror of her life, and yet never once has her noble courage flagged, her splendid spirit failed her."

"Yes," answered Captain Craik, "I have read her character in her story and in her way of relating it. You are to be congratulated on having won the love of a woman whose respect alone would do a man honour."

"He deserves what he has got," said the doctor, laughing. "Findings keepings."

"I did find her and I mean to keep her," I exclaimed.

"Well, you have picked up a fortune," observed Captain Craik. "It is not every man who finds a shipwreck a good investment."

"I know nothing about her fortune," I answered. "She did indeed tell me that

her father was a ship-owner; but I have asked no questions, and only know her as Mary Robertson, a sweet, brave girl, whom I love, and, please God, mean to marry, though she possessed nothing more in the world than the clothes I found her in."

"Come, come," said the doctor.

"You're not a sailor, doctor," remarked Captain Craik, drily.

"But, my dear sir, you'll not tell me that a gold pound's not better than a silver sixpence?" cried the doctor. "Did you never sing this song?—

'Awa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms,
The slender bit beauty you grasp in your arms;
Oh, gie me the lass that has acres o' charms,
Oh, gie me the lass wi' the weel-stockit farms.
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher; then hey for a lass wi' a tocher;
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher; the nice yellow guineas for me.'

Is not an heiress better than a poor wench?"

"I don't see how your simile of the pound and the sixpence applies," answered Captain Craik. "A good woman is a good woman all the world over, and a gift that every honest man will thank God for.

'Mark yonder pomp of costly fashion
Round the wealthy titled bride;
But when compared with real passion,
Poor is all that princely pride.'

That's one of Robbie's too, doctor, and I commend your attention to the whole song as a wholesome purge."

As the conversation was rather too personal to be much to my liking, I was very glad when it was put an end to by Mary coming in with a basin of soup for me.

CHAPTER XII.

THANKS to my darling's devotion, to her unwearied attentions, to her foresight and care of me, I was strong enough to leave my cabin on the third day following my restoration to consciousness.

During that time many inquiries were made after my health by the passengers, and Mary told me that the greatest curiosity prevailed fore and aft to see me. So misfortune had made a little ephemeral hero of me, and this, perhaps, was one stroke of compensation which I should have been very willing to dispense with.

The second officer of the ship, a man of about my height and build, had very kindly placed his wardrobe at my disposal, but all that I had chosen to borrow from him was some linen, which, indeed, I stood greatly in need of; but my clothes, though rather the worse for salt water, were, in my opinion, quite good enough for me to wear until I should be able to buy a new outfit ashore.

At twelve o'clock, then, on the third day I rose and leisurely dressed myself, and then sat waiting for Mary, whose arm to lean on I preferred to any one's else.

She came to the cabin presently, and when she had entered I folded her in my arms with so deep a feeling of happiness and love and gratitude in me, that I had no words to speak to her.

It was when I released her that she said —"Since God has heard our prayers,

dearest, and mercifully preserved us from death, shall we thank Him now that we are together, and say one prayer for my dear father, who, I firmly believe, looks down upon us and has still the power to bless us?"

I took her hand and we knelt together, and first thanking her for reminding me of my bounden duty, I lifted up my heart to Almighty God, Father of all men, who had guarded us amid our perils, who had brought us to the knowledge and love of Him and of each other, by the lesson of hard trials and sorrowful privation.

And I would ask you to believe that I do not relate such circumstances as these from any ostentatious wish to parade my piety, of which God knows I have not so large a store that I need be vain of showing it; but that I may in some poor fashion justify many good men in my own profession who,

because they are scandalised by persons among us that are bad, are confounded with these by people ashore who imagine the typical sailor to be a loose, debauched fellow, with his mouth full of bad language and his head full of drink. I say earnestly that this is not so; that a large and generous soul animates many sailors; that they love God, pray to Him, and in many ways too rough, maybe, to commend them to fastidious piety, but not surely the less honest for the roughness, strive to act up to a just standard of goodness; and that even among the bad—bad, I mean, through the looseness of their morals and the insanity of their language—there is often found a hidden instinctive religion and veneration and fear of God not to be discovered in the classes ashore to which you may parallel them. Nor, indeed, do I understand how this can fail to be; for no familiarity with

the mighty deep can lessen its ever-appealing grandeur to them as a symbol of heavenly power and majesty; and the frequent fear of their lives in which sailors go—the fury of tempests, the darkness of stormy nights, the fragility of the ship in comparison with the mountainous waves which menace her, the horror of near and iron coasts—I say that such things, which are daily presented to them, must inevitably excite and sustain contemplations which very few events that happen on shore are calculated to arouse in the minds of the ignorant classes with whom such sailors as I am speaking of are on a level.

When I quitted the cabin, supported by Mary, I found myself in a very spacious saloon, most handsomely furnished and decorated, and striking me the more by the contrast it offered to the plain and small interior of the *Grosvenor's* cabin.

The table was being prepared for lunch: smartly dressed stewards and under-stewards trotted to and fro; there were flowers on the table, vases of gold fish swinging from the deck, a rich thick carpet underfoot, comfortable and handsome sofas; a piano-forte stood against the mizzen-mast, which was covered with a mahogany skin and gilded; two rows of lamps went the length of the saloon; and what with the paintings on the cabin doors, the curtains, the rich brasswork about the spacious skylights, the bright sunshine streaming in upon the whole scene and kindling a brilliance in the polished woodwork, the crystal on the table, the looking-glasses at the fore end of the saloon—I fairly paused with amazement, scarcely conceiving it possible that this airy, sunshiny, sumptuous drawing-room was actually the interior of a ship, and that we were on the sea, steaming at the

rate of so many miles an hour towards England.

There were a couple of well-dressed women sewing or doing some kind of needlework and conversing on one of the sofas, and on another sofa a gentleman sat reading. These, with the stewards, were all the people in the saloon.

The gentleman and the ladies looked at us when we approached, and all three of them rose.

The ladies came and shook hands with Mary, who introduced me to them; but I forget their names.

They began to praise me; the gentleman struck in, and asked permission to shake me by the hand. They had heard my story: it was a beautiful romance; in short, they overpowered me with civilities, and made me so nervous that I had scarcely the heart to go on deck.

Of course it was all very kindly meant; but then what were my exploits? Nothing to make money out of, nothing to justify my appearance on the boards of a London theatre, nothing to furnish a column of wild writing to a newspaper, nothing to merit even the honour of a flattering request from a photographic company. I very exactly knew what I *had* done, and was keenly alive to the absurdity of any heroizing process.

However, I had sense enough to guess that what blushing honours were thrust upon me would be very short-lived. Who does not thank God at some time or other in his life that there *is* such a thing as oblivion?

So we went on deck; I overhearing one of the ladies talk some nonsense about her never having read or heard of anything more deliciously romantic and exciting than

the young sailor rescuing a pretty girl from a wreck and falling in love with her.

"Did you hear that, Mary?" I whispered.

"Yes," she answered.

"Was it romantic?"

"I think so."

"And exciting?"

"Dreadfully."

"And did they live happily ever afterwards?"

"We shall see."

"Darling, it *is* romantic, and it *is* exciting, to us, and to no one else. Yes, very romantic now that I come to think of it; but all has come about so gradually that I have never thought of the romance that runs through our story. What time did we have to think? Mutineers out of Wapping are no polite garnishers to a love story; and romance must be pretty stoutly bolt-roped

not to be blown to smithereens by a hurricane."

There were a number of passengers on deck, men, women, and children, and when I ran my eye along the ship (the *Grosvenor* would have made a neat long-boat for her) and observed her dimensions, I thought that a city might have gone to sea in her without any inconvenience arising from overcrowding. In a word, she was a magnificent Clyde-built iron boat of some four thousand tons burden, and propelled by eight hundred horse-power engines; her decks white as a yacht's, a shining awning forward and aft; a short yellow funnel, towering masts and broad yards, and embodying every conceivable "latest improvement" in compasses, capstans, boat-lowering gear, blocks, gauges, logs, windlass, and the rest of it. She was steaming over a smooth sea and under a glorious blue sky at

the rate of thirteen knots, or nearly fifteen miles an hour. Cool draughts of air circled under the awning and fanned my hollow cheeks, and invigorated and refreshed me like cordials.

The captain was on deck when we arrived, and the moment he saw me he came forward and shook my hand, offering me many kindly congratulations on my recovery; and with his own hands placed chairs for me and Mary near the mizzen-mast. Then the chief officer approached, and most, indeed I think all, of the passengers; and I believe that had I been as cynical as old Diogenes I should have been melted into a hearty faith in human nature by the sympathy shown me by these kind people.

They illustrated their goodness best, perhaps, by withdrawing, after a generous salutation, and resuming their various employ-

ments or discussions, so as to put me at my ease. The doctor and the chief officer stayed a little while talking to us; and then presently the tiffin-bell rang, and all the passengers went below, the captain having previously suggested that I should remain on deck, so as to get the benefit of the air, and that he would send a steward to wait upon me. Mary would not leave my side; and the officer in charge taking his station on the bridge before the funnel, we, to my great satisfaction, had the deck almost to ourselves.

"You predicted, Mary," I said, "that our lives would be spared. Your dream has come true."

"Yes; I knew my father would not deceive me. Would to God he had been spared!"

"Yet God has been very good to us, Mary. What a change is this, from the

deck of the *Grosvenor*—the seas beating over us, the ship labouring as though at any moment she must go to pieces—ourselves fagged to death, and each of us in our hearts for hours and hours beholding death face to face. I feel as though I had no right to be alive after so much hard work. It is a violation of natural laws and an impertinent triumphing of vitality over the whole forces of Nature."

"But you are alive, dear, and that is all I care about."

I pressed her hand, and after looking around me asked her if she knew whether this vessel went direct to Glasgow.

"Yes."

"Have you any friends there?"

"None. But I have friends here. The captain has asked me to stay with his wife until I hear from home."

"To whom shall you write?"

"To my aunt in Leamington. She will come to Glasgow and take me home. And you?"

"I?"

I looked at her and smiled.

"I! Why, your question puts a matter into my head that I must think over."

"You are not strong enough to think. If you begin to think I shall grow angry."

"But I must think, Mary."

"Why?"

"I must think how I am to get to London, and what I am to do when I get there."

"When we were on the *Grosvenor*," she said, "you did all the thinking for me, didn't you? And now that we are on the *Peri* I mean to do all the thinking for you. But I need not say that. I have thought my thoughts out. I have done with them."

"Look here, Mary, I am going to be candid—— "

"Here comes one of the stewards to interrupt you."

A very civil fellow came with a tray, which he placed on the skylight, and stood by to wait on us. I told him he need not stay, and, addressing Mary, I exclaimed—

"This recalls our farewell feast on the *Grosvenor*."

"Yes; and there is the boatswain watching us, as if he would like to come to us again and congratulate us on having found each other out. Do catch his eye, dear, and wave your hand. He dare not come here."

I waved my hand to him and he flourished his cap in return, and so did three or four men who were around him.

"I am going—— " I began.

"You will eat your lunch first," she interrupted.

"But why will you not listen?"

"Because I have made my arrangements."

"But I wish to speak of myself, dear."

"I am speaking of you—my arrangements concern you—and me."

I looked at her uneasily, for somehow the sense of my own poverty came home to me very sharply, and I had a strong disinclination to hear what my foolish pride might smart under as a mortification.

She read my thoughts in my eyes; and blushing, yet letting me see her sweet face, she said in a low voice, "I thought we were to be married?"

"I hope so. It is my dearest wish, Mary. I have told you I love you. It would break up my life to lose you now."

"You shall not lose me—but neither will I lose you. I shall never release you more."

"Mary, *do* let me speak my thoughts out.

I am very poor. The little that I had has gone down in the *Grosvenor*. I could not marry you as I am. I could not offer you the hand of a pauper. Let me tell you my plans. I shall write, on reaching Glasgow, to the owners of the *Grosvenor*, relate the loss of the ship, and ask for payment of the wages that are due to me. With this money I will travel to London and go to work at once to obtain a berth on another ship. Perhaps, when the owners of the *Grosvenor* hear my story, they will give me a post on board one of their other vessels. At all events I must hope for the best. I will work very hard——"

"No, no, I cannot listen!" she exclaimed, impetuously. "You are going to tell me that you will work very hard to become captain and save a little money; and you will then say that several years must pass before your pride will suffer you

to think yourself in a proper position to make me your wife."

"Yes, I was going to say that."

"Oh, where is your clever head which enabled you to triumph over the mutineers? Has the shipwreck served you as it has the poor steward?"

"My darling——"

"Were you to work twenty years, what money could you save out of this poor profession of the sea that would justify your pride—your cruel pride?"

I was about to speak.

"What money could you save that would be of service when you know that I am rich, when you know that what is mine is yours?"

"Not much," said I.

"Would you have loved me the less had you known me to be poor? Would you not have risked your life to save mine though I

had been a beggar? You loved me because —because I am Mary Robertson; and I love you because you are Edward Royle—dear to me for your own dear sake, for my poor dead father's sake, because of my love for you. Would you go away and leave me because you are too proud to make us both happy? I will give you all I have—I will be a beggar and you shall be rich that you need not leave me. Oh, do not speak of being poor! Who is poor that acts as you have done? Who is poor that can enrich a girl's heart as you have enriched mine?"

She had raised her voice unconsciously, and overhearing herself, as it were, she stopped on a sudden, and bowed her head with a sob.

"Mary," I whispered, "I will put my pride away. Let no man judge me wrongly. I talk idly—God knows how idly—when I speak of leaving you. Yes, I could leave

you—but at what cost? at what cost to us both? What you have said—that I loved you as Mary Robertson—is true. I know in my own heart that my love cannot dishonour us—that it cannot gain nor lose by what the future may hold in store for me with you, dear one, as my wife."

"Now you are my own true sailor boy!" was all she said.

I began this story on the sea, and I desire to end it on the sea; and though another yarn, which should embrace my arrival at Glasgow, my introduction to Mary's aunt, my visit to Leamington, my marriage, and divers other circumstances of an equally personal nature, could easily be spun to follow this—yet the title of this story must limit the compass of it, and with the "Wreck of the *Grosvenor*" my tale should have had an end.

And yet I should be doing but poor justice to the faithful and beautiful nature of my dear wife, if I did not tell you that the plans which she had unfolded to me, and which I have made to appear as though they only concerned myself, included the boatswain and the poor steward. For both a provision was contemplated which I knew her too well to doubt that she had the power to make, or that she would forget: a provision that, on the one hand, would bring the boatswain alongside of us even in our own home, and make him independent of his calling, which, to say the least, considering the many years he had been to sea, had served him but ill, and still offered him but a very scurvy outlook; whilst, on the other hand, it would enable the steward to support himself and his wife and child, without in the smallest degree taxing those unfortunate brains which we could only

hope the shipwreck had not irreparably damaged.

Thus much, and this bit of a yarn is spun.

And now I ask myself, is it worth the telling? Well, however it goes as a piece of work, it may teach a lesson: that good sailors may be made bad, and bad sailors may be made outrageous, and harmless men may be converted into criminals by the meanness of shipowners. Every man knows, thanks to one earnest, eloquent, and indefatigable voice that has been raised among us, what this country thinks of the rascals who send rotten ships to sea. And it is worth while to acquaint people with another kind of rottenness that is likewise sent to sea, which in its way is as bad as rotten timbers—a rottenness which is even less excusable, inasmuch as it costs but a trifling sum of money to remedy, than rotten hulls:

I mean rotten food.

Sailors have not many champions, because I think their troubles and wrongs are not understood. You must live and suffer their lives to know their lives. Go aloft with them, man the pumps with them, eat their biscuit and their pork, and drink their water with them; lodge with crimps along with them; be of their nature, and experience their shore-going temptations, the harpies in trousers and petticoats who prey upon them, who drug them and strip them.

And however deficient a man may be in those qualifications of mind which go to the making of popular novels, I hope no person will charge such a writer with impertinence for drawing a quill on behalf of a race of men to whom Britain owes the greatest part of her wealth and prosperity, who brave death, who combat the elements, who lead in numerous instances the lives of

mongrel dogs, who submit, with few murmurs that ever reach the shore-going ear, to privations which blanch the cheek to read, that our tables and our homes may be abundantly furnished, our banking balances large, and our national importance supreme.

THE END.

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